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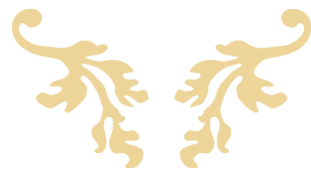
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Parents' perspectives and practices around the schooling of children in rural Northern Nigeria

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Thesis submitted to The Open University for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Abstract

Parental involvement – parents' commitment of resources to children's schooling – has received significant scholarly attention in highly industrialized contexts. However, less evidence exists from sub-Saharan Africa about rural parents' involvement in and perceptions of schooling. The little that exists frequently positions parents as uninterested and uninvolved, often from the perspectives of teachers, students and government officials. This study explores rural African parents' own perspectives on, and involvement in, schooling in two rural *Yorùbá* primary school-communities in North central Nigeria and whether, like the extant literature, teachers hold deficit perspectives of parents. To generate data, it uses an ethnographic approach, embedded within a situated *Ọmọlúàbí* moral ethical ethics framework, employing observation and interview techniques with 22 parents and grandparents, 15 children and 23 teachers. To analyze data, it applies thematic analysis to help capture the essence of the data. Deeper insight is facilitated by the study's conceptual framework, a combination of capabilitarian concepts – functionings (valued beings and doings) and agency (to achieve functionings) – and Bourdieuan tools – social field, habitus (disposition) and capital (resources) – alongside an existing typology of parental involvement. The findings demonstrate that teachers hold deficit, but simultaneously empathetic, views of rural parents, influenced by their in-depth knowledge of school-communities and shared personal experiences, particularly between female teachers and mothers. Parents articulate complex ethnotheories, or cultural beliefs about children's lives, which transcend schooling and integrate other valued forms of learning: learning at home, Islamic schooling, and informal apprenticeships. Though parents value schooling, they are discouraged by their perceptions of its injustice, particularly the differential outcomes for poor and rich children. Parental involvement in schooling also goes beyond existing categories to reveal other basic, communal, disciplinary, socio-cultural and spiritual schooling practices. The study ultimately demonstrates that research on learning in rural sub-Saharan Africa which narrowly conceives learning as schooling and, therefore, excludes analysis of values and agency outside school learning, underrepresents and underrecognizes parental and other agency around learning.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work. The following papers have emerged from work related to this thesis:

Oyinloye, B. (2021). *Reimagining the researcher-participant ethical relationship: towards a participant-centred values-based ethics approach in international and comparative education* (Essay). Joint first place, British Association for International & Comparative Education 2020-2021 Student Essay Prize.

Oyinloye, B. (2021). Towards an Ọmọlúàbí code of research ethics: applying a situated, participant-centred virtue ethics framework to fieldwork with disadvantaged populations in diverse cultural settings. *Research Ethics*, 1-22.

Oyinloye, B. (Forthcoming). Becoming Ọmọlúàbí: The everyday lives of children in rural Muslim communities in North central Nigeria. *Journal of the British Academy*.

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Acronyms

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
DFID	Department for International Development
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Program in Nigeria
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
J/[S]SS	Junior [and Senior] Secondary School
LG[A]	Local Government [Area]
LGEA	Local Government Education Authority
PEIs	Photo-elicitation Interviews
PTAs	Parent-Teachers Associations
S[B]MCs	School[-Based] Management Committees
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
SSIs	Semi-structured Interviews
TDP	Teacher Development Program
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Glossary (Yorùbá)

Àdà	Cutlass
Àáké	Axe
Ààfàà	Islamic priest or teacher (i.e., at elementary Islamic school). Also called a <i>Mallam</i> .
Ará oko	Those who live on the farm (i.e., rural people).
Asàlátù	Muslim weekly prayer service which occurs on weekends.
Beske	Cooked or fried tofu pieces
Ẹ̀kọ̀	Learning. Includes different forms such as <i>ẹ̀kọ̀ ile</i> , <i>ẹ̀kọ̀ ilé kéwú</i> , <i>ẹ̀kọ̀ ilé ìwé</i> , and <i>isẹ̀ ọwọ̀</i> . <i>Ẹ̀kọ̀ ita</i> (learning from ‘outside’) includes all except <i>ẹ̀kọ̀ ile</i> .
Ẹ̀fọ̀	A type of vegetable (similar to spinach) farmed and sold by women.
Fùfú	Local, pap-like dough made from blended, fermented, soaked cassava.
Ilé ìwé	Literally ‘house of books’, where <i>ìwé</i> is book(s). Translated as ‘school’. <i>Ẹ̀kọ̀ ilé ìwé</i> means school learning. To go to school is to ‘ <i>ka ìwé</i> ’, also often translated as ‘educated’.
Ilé kéwú	Literally ‘the house of Arabic’ where <i>kéwú</i> is Arabic. Translated as ‘elementary Islamic school’ but also commonly called Arabic school. <i>Ẹ̀kọ̀ ilé kéwú</i> means elementary Islamic school learning or schooling.
Làákàyè	Common sense or sometimes, cognitive intelligence.
Ìlọsíwájú	Progress or advancement
Ìjọ	Loosely translated as ‘association’. Age mate groupings found in more rural Yorùbá communities who attend or contribute to community events or ‘occasions’ as a group. Also translated as ‘occasions’ (see below, under <i>òde</i>).

<i>Isẹ ọwọ</i>	Literally, ‘the work of the hands’. Referred to in this thesis as ‘handiwork’ and sometimes, informal apprenticeships. Typically translated as manual work or labour but also used to describe small businesses or one’s general occupation.
<i>Kírun</i>	To pray (Islamic prayer).
<i>Kóró</i>	Cashew nut
<i>Lágbájá</i>	Somebody (used in speech to refer to random person for the purpose of illustration).
<i>Òde</i>	Translated as ‘occasions’. Parties or celebratory events such as weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals, title ceremonies, birthdays, etc.
<i>Òdo</i>	Literally means ‘zero’ but typically used to describe poor academic results.
<i>Oko</i>	Farm or farming
<i>Oko kóró</i>	Cashew nut farm
<i>Ojú</i>	Eyes
<i>Ọmọlúàbí</i>	The epitome of character or an ideal being. Comprises a set of aspirational moral codes.
<i>Ọmọ olówó</i>	Children of the rich (especially, politicians)
<i>Ọmọ tálikà</i>	Children of the poor (<i>tálikà</i> means ‘poor’)
<i>Ọmọ mèkúnù</i>	Children of the masses (also children of the poor). <i>Mèkúnù</i> means ‘the masses’.
<i>Tírà</i>	Children’s Islamic school lesson or textbooks (used in <i>ilé kéwú</i>).

Glossary (Concepts)

The below synthesizes commonly-used concepts drawn and extrapolated from the conceptual ideas of Amartya Sen (3.4) and Pierre Bourdieu (3.5).

<i>Agency</i>	the pursuit (towards achievement) of what one values
<i>Capability</i>	the freedom to pursue or achieve <i>functionings</i> (valued beings and doings)
<i>Capabilities</i>	combinations of <i>functionings</i>
<i>Capital</i>	accumulated labour in material or embodied form
<i>Communal capabilities</i>	<i>capabilities</i> of everyday living among groups of individuals who have collective intentionality (wants, intentions and beliefs) and group agency (action and responsibility)
<i>Cultural capital</i>	embodied dispositions of the mind and body which can be objectified (in tangible forms e.g., books, machines, etc.) or institutionalized (e.g., in legal academic credentials)
<i>Culture</i>	rules of practice, including the language, categories, codes, and principles of living
<i>Economic capital</i>	<i>capital</i> that is easily and immediately convertible into money
<i>Field</i>	an autonomous domain of social activity corresponding to certain rules of functioning and encompassing specific institutions which define relationships among, and positions of, the individuals within and outside it
<i>Habitus</i>	internalized, ‘embodied’ social structures or dispositions which generate and organize individuals’ practices within a social field
<i>Learning</i>	acquisition or modification of information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or behaviours through experience, practice, study or instruction

<i>Parental agency</i>	parents' actions to bring about <i>parental goals</i>
<i>Parental capabilities</i>	freedoms parents believe should be exercised to secure children's <i>capabilities</i>
<i>Parental cultural capital</i>	parents' linguistic, cultural, and other competence in affairs related to children
<i>Parental involvement</i>	parents' commitment of tangible resources (e.g., time, energy, finance) to children's schooling
<i>Parental engagement</i>	parents' commitment of tangible (e.g., time, energy, finance) and subtle (support, aspirations, values, expectations; social and cultural <i>capital</i>) resources to children's learning endeavours
<i>Parental ethnotheories</i>	the cultural belief systems underpinning parents' practices around and organization of children's everyday life
<i>Parental functionings</i>	<i>functionings</i> on behalf of children
<i>Parental goals</i>	parents' goals on behalf of children
<i>Realized functionings</i>	what one has successfully pursued and realized
<i>Resources</i>	(or means) convertible to, or used to secure, <i>capabilities</i>
<i>Schooling</i>	activities in institutions established for education which seek to achieve specific learning objectives through classroom instruction, including courses in specialized learning environments, and home-based curricula assignments
<i>Social capital</i>	network of relationships or connections (e.g., family, groups, etc.)
<i>Symbolic capital</i>	<i>capital</i> of representation or recognition (often unrecognized as <i>capital</i> but recognized as legitimate competence)
<i>Wellbeing</i>	the quality (or well-ness) of a person's being or the ability to achieve <i>functionings</i>

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Study motivation

It was mid-way through 2016, and the team had just received the baseline evaluation reports for our teacher training program in Northern Nigeria. It was the six-year £37 million Teacher Development Programme (TDP), funded by the (then) United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) – now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) – which began implementation early 2014. I was its Results and Evidence Technical Lead and was responsible for facilitating the results dissemination workshops. The baseline results showed that children's and teachers' subject level performances in English, Mathematics, and Science and Technology were significantly below the lowest performance level defined by the evaluation assessment framework. Only one teacher out of the 1,158 assessed possessed the requisite subject knowledge in Science and Technology required to teach primary four learners (De et al., 2016).

The results had, again, confirmed an open secret amongst development program implementors in Northern Nigeria: children were not learning, and the challenges were possibly beyond the capacities of international education interventions¹. What some colleagues and I found jarring was that one of the states in our program, at the time also part of another DFID-funded sister program, had the poorest results of the three states evaluated. The sister program was the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN)² and included teacher training on two of the three TDP subjects. At the dissemination workshop in this state, I shared my astonishment with a Northern colleague (born and bred in North western Nigeria and a Christian) who subsequently remarked that s/he³ was not surprised because *these people (i.e., Muslim Northern Nigerians) don't really believe in all this Western education⁴ stuff, they're just doing it because of the incentives!* Her remark was unexpected but not surprising. As will be demonstrated in **Chapter 2**, Northern Nigeria, particularly the North west and North east, has the poorest education indicators and outcomes in Nigeria. Nevertheless, my curiosity was piqued, and I wondered why international development partners did not often ask questions [first] and implement later, choosing instead to do things the other way around. With little understanding of what people believe a priori,

¹ The program's endline three years later saw *no* improvement in teachers' knowledge. Children's learning had 'improved': most primary 6 children (primary 3 at baseline) were *then* functioning at the level of primary 1 or 2 (Cameron et al., 2018).

² ESSPIN began in 2008 as a six-year whole system program to support state to improve the quality of schools and the teaching and learning which occurs within them. It ended after eight and a half years and £124 million of program expenses. I call it a sister program as both TDP and ESSPIN were implemented by the same organization, headquartered in the United Kingdom. Both programs, moreover, shared resources, connections, ideas and an office space in Abuja, the Nigerian capital where many international development programs are headquartered.

³ S/he is used here to conceal the colleague's identity.

⁴ This was the term the colleague used and I retain its usage here illustratively. The term *education* will be further discussed in section 1.3.

development organizations implement multi-million dollar programs which do not seem to produce effect beyond allowances for local partners and salaries for national and international staff like myself, many of whom live in expensive homes in Abuja and Lagos, literally and figuratively miles away from those we're meant to serve.

Two years later when I was considering a topic for my Ph.D., I revisited my curiosity and pondered, 'what do people *really* think about *all this Western education stuff*'? I wanted to ask people who do not often get asked in international development education programming: rural parents. My doctorate, I thought, presented an opportunity to explore these perspectives in-depth and unpack any influences they might have on parents' practices. The doctorate also created the possibility for a deeper understanding of some of the persistent challenges I witnessed firsthand in my professional practice. To note, ESSPIN had a component called *school development planning* implemented, in part, through School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs). These committees 'used' parents and other community members to carry out various activities, among which were campaigns for the return of out-of-school children, including girls, nomadic children and children with disabilities; and the generation of financial and in-kind resources for schools (ESSPIN, 2017). Engaging parents in school-related activities without first seeking to understand what they *really* think about school assumes, uncritically, that parents buy wholeheartedly into the notion of schooling – and if they do not, they should – and may therefore be used as the means to achieve various ends. The extent to which this assumption holds and the insights this may offer on parents' practices around schooling, particularly in rural African communities, is interrogated in this thesis. Before proceeding, I examine my positionality.

1.2. Positionality

It is important to acknowledge my 'self' (Bourke, 2014), and to highlight how this self was positioned within this study. I belong to the *Yorùbá* ethnic group found predominantly in South west Nigeria. They are one of the country's three largest ethnic groups, the other two being the *Igbo* (predominantly in the South east) and the *Hausa/Fulani* (predominantly in the North). I grew up in the state of *Lagos*, in the South west with parents who were indigenes of *Kwara*, in the North central. While a pre-teen, I emigrated to Canada. Sixteen years later (including a few years of international development experience), I returned to the country of my birth for the first time in 2013 to take up the TDP role.

Thus, when I began my Ph.D., Nigeria was among my options given my previous work there and in other African countries. I was interested in sub-Saharan Africa, given evidence of its educational challenges, even

before the COVID-19 pandemic⁵, was direr in comparison with other regions of the world, especially for girls, rural populations and vulnerable groups (see, e.g., UN, 2018). However, after failing to find other programs with whom to partner, Nigeria became the only option as I had former colleagues who could help facilitate my search for schools and communities, where schools would facilitate entry to communities (this will be discussed in **Chapter 5**). I approached a particularly reliable colleague who also happened to be a *Yorùbá* indigene of *Kwara* – henceforth Key Contact 1 [KC1]. Though he was working outside *Kwara* at the time, he explored his contacts and suggested some schools using the simple criteria I provided: primary school located in a small, rural community with no more than a primary and a junior and senior secondary school (J/SSS). KC1's primary contact was a friend who was a principal of a J/SSS. He (henceforth Key Contact 2 [KC2]) suggested three options, in predominantly *Yorùbá* communities: one, the primary school attached to his school (schoolA), and two other primary schools (schoolB and schoolC), both within the same local administrative area and each with its own J/SSS. One of the two other primary schools (schoolC), the most remote of the three schools, was deselected due to reports (at the time) of recent communal clashes between *Yorùbás* and *Fulanis*, one of the other ethnic groups in the state. An initial scoping visit to the two remaining schools at the beginning of the Ph.D. suggested potentially significant differences between both schools relevant to the research objectives. Where one school head insinuated parental apathy, the other was effusive about parents' zeal for, and participation in, schooling. Therefore, although I intended to focus on one school and its community, I decided to select both visited schools to explore these possible differences and enrich the responses to the research questions. Selecting two schools also served as a contingency in case data collection was no longer possible in one. I would find out later, towards the end of the data generation period, that KC2 had also taught at the J/SSS adjacent to the other selected primary school (schoolB) and therefore had firsthand experience with both communities. He was therefore included among those interviewed to offer a comparative perspective.

Returning to Nigeria to work in 2013 was frightful because it was my first time, and being relatively young for the position I was to assume, I was consumed with the fear of underperformance. Though I thrived professionally, I struggled socially. I was not quite Nigerian enough to be amongst Nigerians and was not entirely keen on joining the expatriate community in Abuja because I was opposed to living the often superficial expat life. The TDP office environment comprised expats and Nigerians of different ethnicities. Thus, English served as the communicative language even when we travelled to Northern Nigeria to meet state officials, civil servants, and teachers. With those who did not speak English, we relied on local colleagues to interpret. Returning to be immersed in rural communities in *Kwara* during my Ph.D., therefore, brought its own set of fears. Though my state of origin by parental heritage, I only remember travelling to the state capital, *Ilorin*, once as a child and my surviving memories of the visit are of an

⁵ The pandemic has deepened the divide (UN, 2020).

insurmountable mango tree and a goat in kidbirth. However, I was confident of my ability to thrive given my knowledge of the language – now a delicate combination of English and *Yorùbá* – and local, cultural cues. Given these elements, I was at the least a linguistic ‘insider’ (Cormier, 2018). But not being from the communities and being now from a ‘higher’ economic social class (among other things) than those I would ultimately research, my ‘outsider’ status was also undeniable.

Anthropologists have debated and reflected upon what it means to be a ‘native’ researcher (Hannoum, 2011; Harden, 2011; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Narayan, 1993). These scholars have questioned the assumption that a ‘native’ anthropologist or researcher, i.e., a member of the group or community being researched, presents a more ‘authentic’ insider’s view (Narayan, 1993). For instance, Jacobs-Huey (2002) suggests that communicative competence – appropriate and interpretive use of speech – goes beyond language fluency towards knowledge in ‘discourse styles’ and ‘discourse rules,’ evoking O’Reilly (2012)’s notion of cultural language. Confident as I was in my knowledge of certain cultural cues, I was also aware that I needed to learn more, particularly those specific to the communities I planned to study. Thus, at the beginning of data generation, I discussed these issues at length with my key contacts. In the communities themselves, I astutely observed and learned from their interactions, applying what I had learned when and where necessary. I neither desired nor sought to become a complete insider because it was evident that I was not. My sometimes off-the-cuff remarks (limited though they were) and the revelations of my self that I shared with participants were indicative. These usually occurred at the end of our interactions when I asked participants if they had any questions for me. Some asked who I was and where I had come from, while others queried the study’s implications for themselves and their community as a whole. Pointedly, I had what I call a Malinowski moment⁶ with my first participant in the second community during our second interaction. She, along with her co-wife, was peeling cassava⁷, mechanically tossing the peeled cassava in a pile in the middle while letting the peels fall by her feet as her knife expertly scraped them off each tuber. It appeared to me that the peels had a purpose, so I asked:

B: ... Do you have what you’re doing with these? The ones you have cut from it?

Grandmother1commB⁸: Uhnn?

B: Do you use these or is it, you throw it [away]?

Grandmother1commB: The animals.

⁶ Erickson (2011) writes of posthumous perceptions of Malinowski – a Polish anthropologist known for his ethnography of the Trobriand Islands, now Papua New Guinea – by his Islanders who remembered him as a “champion ass at asking damn fool questions, like ‘You bury the seed tuber root end or sprout end down? (p. 47)’” A Malinowski moment occurs when a researcher asks a question no one from the context would ask because they would already know the answer.

⁷ Cassava is a root vegetable with a shape similar to that of sweet potatoes. It is a tuber like potatoes and yams.

⁸ Participants’ ids follow a simple format: parent type+order of interaction+commA or commB (see 5.3). My ‘id’ is simply ‘B’, my first initial.

B: Ok...the animals!

Grandmother1commB: Don't you have animals?

B: Ehhh...

Grandmother1commB: You don't rear animals?

B: No...

Grandmother1commB: You don't rear goat, you don't rear sheep?!

B: Ehnn (yes), a few chickens⁹...

Grandmother1commB: Uhn uhnn...

B: They [the chickens] don't eat those ones...

Grandmother1commB Co-wife: The, the cows!

B: Uhnn...

Grandmother1commB: Whoever is rearing sheep, who is rearing goat, they come to buy it.

B: Ok, they buy it from you!

Grandmother1commB: Ehh ehnn!

.....

Grandmother1commB: Where you live, they don't do this type there? There's no cassava there? They don't grow it?

B: Ehnnn...it's the one they've ground [*laughs*]

Grandmother1commB: [*laughs*] They don't grow cassava?! (Grandmother1commB 2018/12/19)

Figure 1.1 A family cassava peeling session



⁹ KC1's family, with whom I had stayed for a few days at the beginning of fieldwork, reared chickens, so I 'hedged' the truth to save whatever little reputation remained in this moment.

Situations such as these, experienced so early in the data generation process, confirmed my outsider status to my self. Participants were instrumental in showing me my self, that is, their perceptions of me defined my status not only to myself but also to everyone else. Milligan (2016) notes that much of her identity was “given to her” by her participants (p. 248) who, as they became active with her research, gradually shifted their perceptions of her towards an insider. My experience was in some ways the opposite: because of my physical appearance and my spoken *Yorùbá*, many participants assumed I was just from another state or town and thereby accorded me veritable insider status at the onset. Upon learning more about me and where I came from, some shifted towards a higher recognition of my outsider status, even as they acknowledged elements of my insider-ness. Towards the end of data generation, a teacher from the first school told me, “You wear hijab with us, but you don’t pray with us!” (Fieldnotes 2019/01/29). This perceptive flux is similar to what Arthur (2010, cited in Milligan, 2016) describes as shifting identities where the status the researcher assumes or is perceived as is determined situationally and temporally. She and colleagues later suggest a reconceptualization of the insider-outsider binary towards a more nuanced, “complex understanding of the relationship between the researcher and the researched” and how both may identify themselves as either, both, or anywhere within the insider-outsider continuum (McNess et al., 2015, p. 297). Though perhaps I was closer to the insider end of the continuum, I operated in a state of flux throughout data generation: how I perceived myself and how I was perceived were both situated and circumstantial. They occurred within the specific context of the research communities and were related to a particular event, as shown above.

Moreover, participants’ perceptions of me were not delinked from issues of privilege and power which are themselves linked to the issue of class. As a Ph.D. student, I am far from wealthy. However, my current residency in the United Kingdom and the educational opportunities this affords; the capability to enter and leave Nigeria at will; and the economic resources to travel to Nigeria to do research rendered tenuous any claims to total insiderness I may have entertained for the poor, rural contexts of my research. “Class and educational” issues (and associated issues of power) remained even if those of access and relations were somewhat mitigated by my shared ethnicity with research participants (Sultana, 2007, p. 375). Having grown up in urban, inner-city Lagos, I was not simply *going back home* to rural *Kwara*. My acute awareness of my class and educational privileges meant I needed to find ways to respond to these and other “ambivalences, discomfort, tensions and instabilities” when they arose in my research, particularly during my time in the communities (p. 377). Doing this required reflexivity, a continuous, self-scrutinous assessment and negotiation of positionality (including power) and my location within the insider-outsider continuum (Bourke, 2014; Sultana, 2007). While this is reflected in the overarching dynamism of this thesis through the triangulation of literature, concepts, methodologies and analytical techniques, it is perhaps most explicit within my methodology. I discuss reflexivity in greater detail in my methodology (4.3) but next, I highlight the research background, objectives and questions.

1.3. Research background, objectives and questions

Parental involvement in children's education is widely believed to be vital for the academic and social development of children (e.g., Barger et al., 2019; Boonk et al., 2018), including the effectiveness (i.e., effect) of schooling on children's learning outcomes such as literacy and numeracy (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014). Global reports like the 2017/18 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report on *Accountability in Education* highlight the importance of parental involvement in children's academic achievement and position parents as critical stakeholders responsible for supporting children's attendance, effort and behaviour, and creating a learning environment in the home (UNESCO, 2017). Others, such as the World Bank Group's 2018 World Development Report, stress the importance of parental investments on children's preparedness to learn upon arrival in school.

While these reports acknowledge parents living in conditions of poverty or disadvantage are highly constrained in their involvement, either by being unavailable or unable to provide the requisite resources and support (World Bank, 2018) or by lacking the confidence to interact with teachers and schools (UNESCO, 2017), neither offers a real account of parents' perspectives about schooling nor elicits parents' voices about their involvement. As will be shown in **Chapter 3**, despite the vast quantitative literature on the associations between parental involvement and children's academic and other abilities, the literature is relatively silent on parents' own narratives. This silence is particularly loud around the narratives of parents in rural sub-Saharan Africa. Given the linkages between academia and the international education development sector (particularly in terms of design, research, and monitoring and evaluation), this academic silence may partially explain the relative exclusion of parents in the implementation of international education interventions such as those described in **1.1**. Where parents' perspectives are provided, it is done primarily through teachers, learners, or government officials and is predominantly deficit.

To contribute to this gap and deepen existing knowledge, this study has multiple objectives: 1) to amplify rural sub-Saharan African parents' voices by eliciting, in-depth, their perspectives on schooling; 2) to illuminate their involvement in schooling by exploring their practices around schooling both in school and at home; and 3) to explore whether teachers' views of parents, as the literature suggests, are similarly deficit-laden. These interconnected objectives enable the study to trouble the assumption that parents unquestioningly buy into schooling and therefore always choose schooling for their children amongst other available and accessible options within their home and community environment. By extension, it also questions the assumption that parents who do not send children to school do not value schooling.

To achieve these objectives, the study applies capabilitarian and Bourdieuan tools to the data generated within two rural *Yorùbá* school-communities in *Kwara* to enable rich insights into what parents value, what they choose to pursue, and the social structures which underpin these values and pursuits. The capability approach was conceived by economist philosopher Amartya Sen as an alternative to human capital views of human development which for him focused too narrowly on wealth, income, or technological progress. He believed development should aim to expand people's 'capabilities', that is, their freedoms to pursue or achieve whatever they valued being or doing where such valued beings and doing, known as 'functionings', constituted their wellbeing (Sen, 1985). A capabilitarian view of schooling, therefore, seeks to understand the types of capabilities that parents, learners, communities, governments (Tikly & Barrett, 2011), as well as teachers (Buckler, 2012), have reason to value. However, schooling-related capabilities are formed in context and underpinned by the structures that enable or constrain them. As such, capabilitarian analyses become a powerful analytical tool when accompanied by a social theory (Unterhalter, 2003). For this, this study draws from Bourdieu.

Bourdieu's main concepts were developed and refined over decades but have gained renewed prominence given their conceptualization of societal inequality, particularly its reproduction through schooling. This study applies his three interconnected concepts of field, capital and habitus. Fields are social spaces, akin to say, a football field, in which players or social agents follow specific rules and use different strategies to maintain or enhance their position (Thompson, 2014). Capital is the currency of the field (Grenfell, 2009) and represents agents' accumulated labour in tangible or embodied forms (Bourdieu, 1986). There are four types, though three often used: 1) economic (money and assets); 2) cultural (embodied knowledge; aesthetic or cultural preferences; language; credentials; and objects such as books, artefacts, etc.); 3) social (networks and affiliations, e.g., family, heritage, religious affiliations, etc.); and 4) the lesser identified, symbolic (things that represent other types of capital and are interchangeable in different fields, e.g., credentials, titles, etc.) (Thompson, 2014). Habitus is a set of "internalized, embodied social structures" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 468) which, in relation to capital within the field, shapes agents' "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55).

To categorize the schooling practices of parents, towards achieving the second objective in particular, the study employs an empirical typology of parental involvement. The parental involvement literature has, over the years, produced various typologies. Rather than re-invent the wheel, this study adopts the categorizations in Barger et al. (2019)'s meta-analysis of 448 studies, including from countries outside the typical study contexts of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom (e.g., Finland, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan). Their typology reflects commonly agreed forms of parental involvement at school (*participation* in school activities and involvement in school *governance* or decision-making) and at home

(discussion and encouragement of children's academic pursuits, cognitive intellectual activities, and homework involvement).

To achieve the study's objectives, therefore, the conceptual model is used to deepen insight into the following three research questions:

- 1) How do teachers in rural, public primary schools in *Kwara* state perceive the parents of the children who attend their schools?
- 2) What are the perspectives, on schooling, of parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in *Kwara* state?
- 3) In what ways are parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in *Kwara* state involved with their children's schooling?

The first research question is important because it fulfils one of the study's objectives and its position as 'first' neither suggests teachers are more important than parents nor that teachers were 'first' spoken to. Rather, positioning it as question (1) paves the path for parents' perspectives, enabling parents to figuratively respond to the perspectives of teachers. As will be discussed in **3.7**, this question is also important as it examines schools' expectations, providing insight into schools' evaluative criteria and enabling a deeper understanding of cultural capital in schooling. Next, I clarify the terms that will be frequently used in this study.

1.3.1. Clarifying some concepts

The preceding discussion has employed the terms schooling and education interchangeably to reflect how the terms are often synonymized either within the literature or in general speech. However, there are subtle differences. Osborne (2008, p. 27) argues that early European conceptions of schooling were as an activity that happened at 'schools': the physical spaces used to "socialize, train and even indoctrinate the young, to induct them into the societies in which they would spend their adult lives as citizens." Education, he suggests, though achievable through and a superset of schooling, is unconfined to schools' physical spaces and attainable through activities that "expand one's intellectual horizons, sharpen one's minds, and enlarge one's capacity for thought and reflection" (p. 27). Demands of democratic citizenship and increasing public interest in schooling, he suggests, have translated into explicit idealistic and 'educational' aims within schooling, a trend which may explain the frequent interchanging of the two concepts in the literature.

UNESCO offers a similar view of education, defining it as the “processes by which societies deliberately transmit their accumulated information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies and behaviours across generations” (UNESCO-UIS, 2012, p. 79). Such processes are designed to engender learning: the acquisition of what these processes transmit. The agency does not define schooling but conceives *school-based education* as the educational activities that occur in institutions established for education and which seek to achieve “specific learning objectives through classroom instruction including courses in specialized learning environments” (p. 83).

As these definitions imply, education is broader than schooling and the conflation of the two hides the nuance between them. Thus, this study maintains their distinction, adopting UNESCO’s definitions. To further minimize conflation, it uses the term schooling instead of [school-based] education and adapts UNESCO’s definition to define schooling as *the educational activities that occur in institutions established for education and which seek to achieve specific learning objectives through classroom instruction, including courses in specialized learning environments, and home-based curricula assignments*. However, the study uses *education* when citing or alluding to literature that uses the term, and *learning* when discussing the acquisition of schooling and other forms of education, broadly defined, in the study contexts. To highlight the colonial, European heritage of the public schooling system in many African countries, including Nigeria, schooling is commonly referred to as ‘Western education’ and this term is used in this study where it arises either in speech, as in **1.1**, or within the literature. Occasionally, the terms ‘secular,’ ‘formal,’ or ‘formal public’ schooling are also used to distinguish European-heritage schooling from others, especially when multiple forms of schooling are being discussed (as the findings will demonstrate, Islamic schooling also exists in the research communities. While the study also highlights this, its focus remains on ‘formal schooling’).

‘Rural’ is another essential term. Buckler (2012) notes that many studies of rural schooling fail to define rurality, with the implication that rural represents all that is not urban. Few studies use population measures – often inconsistent without an agreed threshold – while others, geophysical features (e.g., mountains, water, hostile terrains, etc.) or the distance between settlements and a paved road. Acknowledging that every rural community is unique, Budge’s (2006) study of rural America suggests that many still share features such as low population density, school-community interdependence, historical conflicts on the purpose of schooling, and the extraction of youth, among others. Madu (2010) analyses five features of rurality in Nigeria: non-centrality (vis-à-vis other locations in terms of service provision and functionality); homogeneity of characteristics; low ‘urbanization,’ e.g., population density, industrialization, and literacy levels; extensive use of land; and low transformation (e.g., low incomes, and few or no health and socio-cultural institutions). His literature review revealed other notable features: open landscape, prevalence of agriculture and strong rural self-identification. Adelabu (2008) opts for a

more demographic and infrastructural view, defining rural communities in South west Nigeria as those “with fewer than 3,000 people and where...basic infrastructures like electricity, pipe-borne water, motorable roads, hospitals and post office are absent” (p. 47).

The above features offer a helpful frame to view the ‘rural’ communities of this study which share many of these characteristics – except the geophysical – and may be defined in line with Adelabu's, albeit, with much smaller populations. However, it is important to note that there are degrees or hierarchies of rurality as alluded to in **1.2**. For example, the non-selected school/community was considered ‘rural-remote’, a term often used in the research context to describe hard to reach rural places. Likewise, one of the two selected schools/communities, as will be explained in **Chapter 5**, is considered *more* rural than the other, due to the community's lesser centrality, higher distance to the state capital and lower population density. Nevertheless, as Madu (2010) cautions and as the less rural community hints, rural spaces are dynamic and subject, in varying degrees, to transformative forces that alter their degree of rurality over time.

Finally, some clarification is provided regarding the conceptualization of parents. The study includes grandparent participants among ‘parents’ – fathers or mothers or persons who have the care and custody of a child (UBEC, 2005) – given they were the primary guardians of children who attended the primary schools in the focal communities. While the idea of the traditional extended African family is changing as families living in urban areas become more nucleic, extended family systems still feature prominently in rural and less urban areas (Ugiagbe & Edegbe, 2017). In such systems, ‘parenting’ or child-rearing responsibilities are collective and thus, not the exclusive remit of biological parents but of members of the extended family (Mkhize, 2006) who typically, though not always, live within the compound or community.

Extended family systems were traditionally practiced among the patrilineal and patriarchal *Yorùbás*. Married women lived in their husband's homes within a compound or village comprising the husband's kin in an extended family network (Roberts, 2004). Polygynous families/households functioned as one unit and co-wives (within a household), along with other wives in the network, collectively and highly cooperatively carried out traditionally assigned roles (Sudarkasa, 1980). Extended systems persist today primarily among rural *Yorùbás* while polygyny is practiced predominantly among Muslims and in some rural communities. In the rural Muslim *Yorùbás* communities of this study, polygyny is practiced and extended family systems are predominant. Thus, under conditions of harmonious co-habitation between co-wives, collective parenting extends to senior and junior wives as well as stepchildren. In smaller, rural communities, collective parenting extends to other community members. Greater detail about both communities is provided in **Chapter 5**.

The next section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.4. Thesis structure

This introductory chapter has articulated my motivation for and positionality within this study, provided a background, and introduced the study's questions. Notably, given the richness and depth of this thesis and owing to word count constraints, I have embedded a discussion at the end of each findings chapter rather than include a distinct discussion chapter. The structure of the rest of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the national and state-level contexts within which the study's communities are located. In doing so, it illustrates the complex landscapes preceding European-style schooling and with which this newer schooling form contended, foregrounding the persistence of these contentions in the present-day public schooling system.

Chapter 3 first undertakes an in-depth review of the literature on parental involvement in schooling in the more industrialized contexts where much of the existing evidence is produced, and in sub-Saharan Africa where much less evidence exists. The evidence from Africa is characterized by significant knowledge gaps and provides a rationale for the research questions this study seeks to answer. The chapter then develops the study's conceptual framework, which combines Amartya Sen's capability concepts and Bourdieu's social theoretical tools, alongside an empirical typology of parental involvement presented earlier in the chapter (Barger et al., 2019), before re-introducing the research questions.

Chapter 4 details the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions which underpin the study's qualitative framework and ethnographic approach. It also presents its ethics framework, the *Qmqlúàbí* moral ethical framework, which provides a novel participant-driven approach to research with economically disadvantaged communities, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 5 describes the two communities in which the study was conducted and discusses the study design, including the situatedness of informed consent and sampling and the unanticipated ways methods transpired in practice. It also details the thematic analytical process, while highlighting the study's analytical linguistic choices, and justifies the study's trustworthiness.

Chapter 6 is the first findings chapter and responds to the first research question. It applies the study's conceptual framework to analyze teachers' varied perspectives on parental functionings, agency freedom, and agency achievement (the capability space) and their understanding of the structures (social space) which underpin these. These findings shed light on teachers' understandings of and relationships with their school-communities, revealing insights previously not generated in the literature. They also provide a background for the subsequent two chapters.

Chapter 7 is the second findings chapter and focuses on parents' perspectives around schooling, particularly their functionings (the capability space), their understanding of what happens in school and their role in schooling. The findings reveal similarities and differences vis-à-vis teachers' perspectives and provide unique insight into parents' complex views around schooling as well as other forms of learning that occur within the home-community environment.

Chapter 8 is the final findings chapter and centres on parents' involvement practices around schooling and the influences of structures (the social space) on these. Like parents' perspectives, the findings reveal similarities and differences between parents' and teachers' perspectives, particularly around parental agency freedom. Like the previous chapter, these findings uncover key insights on parental agency which transcends the school space.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by synthesizing the study's main findings, providing new insights, and outlining the important contributions made to existing knowledge. Some limitations are highlighted, and some implications for universal primary education and the international education architecture discussed. Possible areas of future research are identified before the thesis concludes with some final remarks.

Yorùbá proverbs, provided by participants, are included before each findings chapter to provide a sense of what is to come.

Before proceeding to **Chapter 2**, some stylistic choices are clarified. The thesis uses Canadian spelling. Quotations and citations follow the 7th edition of the APA style guidelines. As seen in the preceding sections, single quotations highlight terms often used in the literature, and italics emphasize words or phrases. Single quotations are also used to identify English words or phrases used by participants in their narratives. *Yorùbá* words and phrases, including geographic locations, are italicized. Gendered pronouns, e.g., she or he, do not exist in the *Yorùbá* language; thus, general references to 'persons' rather than specific people are written as s/he. Cross-referenced links are identifiable by their bolded and italicized font, e.g., **2.1**. On-screen readers may follow links by clicking on the bolded/italicized text. Right click 'Previous View' returns to the previous position/page.

Chapter 2. Context

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed my motivations for this study, introduced its research questions and clarified some key terms. This chapter presents the national- and state-level contexts of the study. First, it highlights some key demographic statistics and the educational policy landscape in Nigeria. Then, it shares a brief history of *Kwara* state, particularly the emergence of schooling in its capital. Finally, it reviews the current state of basic education in the state.

2.2. Nigeria country overview

With a projected population of 200 million (World Bank, 2019), Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. As of 2020, it is also the continent's largest economy in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) (Naidoo, 2020), a position it has alternated with South Africa since 2014. A former British colony, Nigeria is situated in West Africa and bordered by former French colonies: Cameroon and Chad to its East, Niger in its North, and Benin to its West.

Figure 2.1 A map of Nigeria and surrounding countries (source: Google)



Formerly split into three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern) during colonial administration, it now has 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) which replaced Lagos, the country's most populous city, as the capital in 1991. These 37 areas are further divided into six administrative geopolitical zones – South south, South east, South west, North central, North west and North east – which are groupings of

states generally with similar ethnicities and socio-political histories. Each state is further divided into administrative districts known as local government areas (LGAs) while Abuja is subdivided into council areas. Nigeria's largest ethnic groups are the *Yorùbás*, *Igbos*, and *Hausas* but scholars suggest there are hundreds of other ethnolinguistic groups of which estimates range between 250 and 400 (Brann, 1991), including sub-groups of the three largest groups. Ethnic fissures often conflate economic and geopolitical ones, the most destructive culmination of which was the civil war of 1967-1970 between a secessionist Igbo state (Biafra) and the rest of Nigeria, led by a Northern military head of state.

Despite its apparent wealth, Nigeria is one of the most unequal countries in the world with a vast proportion of its population living in poverty. Recent projections suggest Nigeria now has the largest number of extremely poor rural and urban persons globally – some 87 million people – even more than India, the second-most populous country in the world, which has 73 million (Kharas et al., 2018). Unlike India's figure which is projected to continue to fall, Nigeria's is expected to rise. At current projections, Nigeria's rural poverty is expected to increase by another 4 million over the next decade (Kharas et al., 2020). Various conditions may be responsible for this recent scenario. The decline in crude oil prices and other non-oil sectors in late 2015 (NBS, 2016), along with political uncertainty and policy decisions by the Federal administration in 2016 plunged Nigeria into a deep economic recession, from which it is struggling to recover. In the third quarter of 2018, the national unemployment rate – those aged 15 to 64 who are available for, but without, work – was 23.13% (NBS, 2019), a figure which masks significant geographical and seasonal variation between and within states, and the quality of employment, much of which exists in the informal sector (see ILO, 2020). Including the underemployment rate – those working 1) between 20 and 40 hours or 2) 40 hours or more but in an activity which underutilizes their skills, time and qualifications (NBS, 2019) – reveals a total rate of 43.2%. In the fourth quarter of 2020, Nigeria's combined (unemployment and underemployment) rate was 56.12% and its 33.28% unemployment rate was the second highest in the world and in nearly a decade of national reporting (NBS, 2021). By comparison, *Kwara's* combined rate was 42.5% in 2018, and 35.71% in 2021 though the NBS cautions that low rates do not signal improving conditions given migration and labour force exits.

Nigeria's public pre-tertiary schooling system comprises universal basic (one year of early childhood, six of primary, and three of junior secondary) and three years of senior secondary schooling, a 1-6-3-3 structure. Universal basic schooling is free by Federal policy, as will be discussed next, but in reality, states charge a variety of fees including entrance, term, end of term along with significant examination costs at the end of secondary (see **Appendix G**). The academic calendar typically runs from October until July/August though these are subject to state-level changes, strikes, election year closures, etc. While states and even schools run various timetables at the basic level, a typical primary school day in the state of this study runs between

8 a.m. and 1.30 p.m., includes 30minute lessons (35 in upper primary), and two breaks (one half an hour, and another 15 minutes). The next section provides an overview of universal basic schooling in Nigeria.

2.2.1. Nigeria's education policy landscape: Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE)

By legislation, *Kwara* state implements Universal Primary Education (UPE), a Federal scheme which began in 1976 (Nwachukwu, 1985), succeeding existing regional UPE programs¹⁰. The scheme provided free primary schooling across Nigeria, supported large-scale construction of new primary schools and funded teacher training. It ended four years later in 1981 when responsibilities were devolved to states (Oyelere, 2007) to finance the considerable increase in education expenditure caused by underestimation of enrolment (Csapo, 1983). Nearly two decades later in 1999, as part of the Education for All movement, the federal government launched Universal Basic Education (UBE), an extension of its predecessor, which obligated government to provide “free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school (JSS) age” (UBEC, 2005, p. 2). According to the 2004 UBE Act (hereafter, UBE), basic education comprises one year of early childhood care and education,¹¹ six years of primary, and three years of JSS; adult literacy and non-formal education; skills acquisition programs; and the education of nomads, migrants, women and girls, *almajirai*¹², street children and persons with disabilities (UBEC, 2005, p. 12). In addition to free tuition (or fees), UBE mandates the government to freely provide books, instructional materials, classrooms, furniture and lunch.

Structurally, UBE legislated the establishment of the Federal Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); its state correlates, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs); and its local subsidiaries, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). Financing for UBEC was mandated at 2% of Nigeria's consolidated revenue; however, funding for states (SUBEBs) was not unconditional. States were required to contribute 50% of the total funds requested from UBEC where such funds could be used for intervention in infrastructure, instructional materials and teacher training. Crucially, UBEC intervention funds, as they are commonly called, do not cover teachers' salaries or other overheads costs – these remain the

¹⁰ By 1960 when Nigerian gained independence from Britain, the Western (including the capital, Lagos) and Eastern regions were implementing regional UPE schemes (Oyelere, 2007). The Northern region, in which this research is situated, began UPE later in 1976 as part of the Federal policy.

¹¹ This was implemented to varying degrees. In 2013, the National Council on Education (NCE), the nation's highest decision-making body on education mandated a year of compulsory, free pre-primary education (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014). Many public schools now offer two years: the two schools in this study both offer KG1 and KG2 though children are combined in one classroom with no apparent differentiation unlike in higher levels where each level is grouped separately and faces opposite sides of the classroom.

¹² *Almajirai*, a Hausa term, refers to a practice in Northern Nigeria where boys (*almajiri*) and girls (*almajira*) leave home to attend an Islamic boarding school led by a *Mallam*, an Islamic teacher. Some studies suggest girls comprise up to 30% of *almajirai* (Creative Associates International, 2009).

constitutional responsibilities of states and LGAs and are funded through federal monthly allocations paid to states (and typically channelled thereafter through state Ministries of Education or similar agencies). Constitutionally, LG allocations are paid into an account controlled by states – the State Joint LG Account – to enable the state to add its own contributions to the LG (Sanusi et al., 2013). UBE mandates UBEC to strictly monitor the funds it disburses to states and, where necessary, withhold subsequent funding if, through its monitoring mechanisms, it discovers misuse of existing or previous funds. Notably, in UBE, parents are tasked with “endeavoring to send” children to primary and JSS and ensuring their attendance (UBEC, 2005, p. 3). Non-compliant parents, at the first offence, are to be reprimanded; at the second, ordered to pay a fine of 2,000 Naira or imprisoned for a month or both; and at the third, ordered to pay a fine of 5,000 Naira or imprisoned for two months or both. However, compliance is rarely monitored and punitive measures are rarely applied.

Notwithstanding its admirable aims, UBE implementation has been fraught with challenges. The challenges of *UBE* – gross underestimation of enrolment, shortage of certified teachers and significant underfunding (due to significant financing underestimations) (Bolaji et al., 2016; Csapo, 1983) – have persisted in the implementation of *UBE* after 1999. While increases in national education expenditure through UBE have increased schooling access (Rodd, 2017), despite significant international financing (Bolaji et al., 2019), Nigeria’s public schools continue to face numerous challenges, much of it accumulated from past implementation failures (Bolaji et al., 2019; Whitehead, 2019). These challenges have over time translated into weak learning outcomes, particularly for children in public schools. For example, the 2015 Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) suggested only 44 percent of children in public primary school could read at least one of three words in English or a national language (NPC, 2015). Comprehension levels were worse: only 22 percent could read and respond to at least one of three sentences presented as questions. National numeracy levels were only slightly better: 56 percent of children could correctly sum single digits. For the multi-state ESSPIN programme highlighted in **Chapter 1**, the 2016 final programme survey across the five states of intervention in the South west (Lagos), South east (Enugu), North central (Kwara) and North west (Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa) revealed only 12 percent of primary 4 children in intervention schools were performing at grade level in literacy (72 percent were at the level of primary 1), while 8 percent were at grade level in numeracy (34 and 30 percent were at pre-school and primary 1 levels respectively) (Cameron et al., 2016). More recent national analysis suggest similarly poor learning outcomes. Using adult (aged 18 to 37) data to estimate children’s learning profiles (the relationship between completed schooling and learning outcomes), Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2021) suggest only 19 percent of Nigerians who have completed primary school can read a three-sentence passage fluently or with minimal help. Significant geopolitical zonal differences exist and in majority Muslim Northern Nigeria, UBE implementation (and therefore, learning) challenges are particularly severe. On one hand, they reflect the later, slower implementation of *UBE* – the region was the last to begin implementation. On the other, and as will be

further discussed in the case of *Kwara*, they reflect tensions between religious (in this case, Islamic) and secular schooling (in this case, founded on Christian ideals and values). The most violent expressions of these tensions occur in the North east among the activities of insurgent terrorist group *Boko Haram*, commonly interpreted as “Western education is forbidden” (Thurston, 2018, p. 14) though technically translated as “deceptive knowledge is sin” (Adamu, 2012, as cited in Akanji, 2013), whose violent repudiation of ‘Western’ values, cultures and education has resulted in the near collapse of the public schooling system.

In the North west (and to a lesser extent, the North central), significant challenges with out-of-school children¹³; school infrastructure and classroom resources; curriculum and teaching methods have resulted in poor learning outcomes, often worse for girls (boys in the South east), poor and rural children (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; UNICEF, 2017). Pervasive poverty (up to 90% child poverty in some states); geography (rurality and remoteness, i.e., proximity to school (Bano, 2020)); and socio-religious perspectives around ‘Western education,’ particularly for girls, have deepened the region’s educational inequities (UNICEF, 2017). Teachers are not exempt: opaque and inconsistent practices abound around teacher recruitment, deployment, remuneration and training and support, severely affecting teachers’ motivations and aspirations (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; Watts & Allsop, 2016). *Kwara*, a state in North central Nigeria faces many of these challenges, though to different degrees. Before examining UBE in *Kwara*, the following provides a brief history of the state.

2.3. Kwara state and Ilorin Emirate: A brief history

2.3.1. Kwara

This study’s state, *Kwara*, is sometimes called a ‘bridge’ state given its South western (*Yorùbá*) cultural origins and its North western (Islam) religious alignment. Thus, the state is not considered part of the ‘core’ North, i.e., North west and North east¹⁴. Among its ethnicities are the *Yorùbá* (majority), *Fulani*, *Nupe*, and lastly, *Bariba* who were once part of the Republic of Benin (KSG, 2017).

¹³ UNICEF (2017) suggests 10 million Nigerian children between ages five and 14 are out-of-school, including those only attending Quranic/Arabic schools which are not considered formal, public schools. The majority of these are in the North.

¹⁴ E.g., on education indicators such as primary/JSS net attendance rate, schooling status, etc., *Kwara* is usually grouped with South western states (NPC, 2015).

Figure 2.2 A map of Nigeria and Kwara (source: Oladeji & Sule, 2015)



Kwara is multi-religious with adherents to Islam (Muslims), Christianity (Christians) and traditional¹⁵ religion although the capital *Ilorin* (comprised of three LGAs) and its environs comprise predominantly *Yorùbá* Muslims with a growing Christian population. Major industries include farming, traditional textile weaving and pottery. The 2017 global Multidimensional Poverty Index ranked *Kwara* 20th poorest out of 37 areas (OPHI, 2019), suggesting it is one of the better-off states; however, this masks significant variation within *Ilorin* and between *Ilorin* and other parts of the state.

2.3.2. Ilorin Emirate

Ilorin's complex, often debated, history has garnered attention from Nigerian and other scholars. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore these debates in detail, a brief overview of this history – highlighting some generally accepted conclusions – is provided to underscore the complex environment within which European style schooling was introduced. Except where otherwise noted, what follows has been abstracted primarily from the works of Danmole (1980) and Johnson (1921).

¹⁵ Traditional religion here refers to pre-Islamic and pre-Christian theisms practiced by different ethnic groups. That of the *Yorùbá*, for example, includes a supreme being, numerous divinities or deities, and hundreds of lesser gods and spirits within a cosmological, metaphysical, and spiritual belief system.

The epicentre (*Ilorin* town) of the area now called *Ilorin* Emirate¹⁶ was an important settler town and trading centre of the Old *Oyo* empire¹⁷ linking to Northern Nigeria and the Southern coast. In addition to *Yorùbá* settlers from Old *Oyo*¹⁸ who came to hunt, the town's abundant rainfall and vegetation also attracted *Hausa*, *Fulani* and *Nupe* settlers who came to graze cattle. The groups practiced diverse religions: *Yorùbás* predominantly practiced the *Yorùbá* traditional religion, with a very small minority practicing Islam; while *Hausa*, *Fulani* and *Nupe* predominantly practiced Islam although some among them also practiced their traditional religions.

Various entry points have been suggested for Islam's emergence in *Yorùbáland*. On one hand, through the neighbouring *Nupes* (who had already received Islam in the 16th century) with whom *Yorùbás* strove, by whom they were culturally influenced, and with whom they held strong commercial relations. On the other, through the *Hausa* and the *Bornu* empires (where Islam was also already well established by the 16th century) with whom the *Yorùbás* also held commercial relations and whose slaves, traders and clerics – who came along with imports – continued to practice Islam in *Yorùbáland*. By the 18th century, Islam had spread such that Muslim communities were well established within Old *Oyo*. They were not perceived as a threat: the empire facilitated (and protected) their presence to preserve its economic (commercial goods) and military (source of horses, cavalry men and charms) interests.

Ilorin Emirate was created after a power tussle between a powerful *Old Oyo* soldier based in *Ilorin* town¹⁹ and the sons of a travelling Muslim scholar whom the soldier had encouraged to relocate to the town. The victors expanded *Ilorin*'s territory into nearby areas comprising the *Yorùbá* sub-groups mentioned earlier and pledged allegiance to the Northern Sokoto Caliphate in the early 1820s. As *Old Oyo* began to disintegrate, *Ilorin* was one of the new towns to which *Yorùbás* migrated.

While the creation of the Emirate and the successful spread of Islam cemented *Ilorin*'s position as a Muslim town, in the other areas within the Emirate, traditional religious practices continued alongside Islam's spread. However, during the colonial period, Emirate district heads who now had to reside in their own district²⁰ built mosques and discouraged non-Islamic practices such as the celebration of non-Islamic festivals. Today, Islam's dominance within *Ilorin* and nearby communities, including those of this research,

¹⁶ An Emirate is a geopolitical territory governed by Islamic (Sharia) law and led by a dynastic monarch called an *Emir*. *Ilorin* Emirate includes *Ilorin*, the state capital (comprised of *Ilorin* East, West and South LGAs), and adjacent LGAs.

¹⁷ The Old *Oyo* empire, or *Oyo* kingdom was a large, powerful empire in *Yorùbáland* which reigned from the 17th to the early 19th century when it began to disintegrate due to the growing power and influence of *Ilorin* and other successor states.

¹⁸ Danmole (1980) notes some *Yorùbá* sub-groups claim indigeneity to their area within the Emirate though he highlights these sub-groups were all controlled by Old *Oyo* before the creation of the Emirate.

¹⁹ His presence drew people to *Ilorin* e.g., *Hausa*/*Fulani* slaves from *Old Oyo* masters, *Yorùbá* Muslims, *Hausa*/*Fulani* pastoralists, etc.

²⁰ Some districts to the north and east of *Ilorin* were directly controlled from *Ilorin* town as fiefdoms (Danmole, 1980). Pre-colonialism, heads of these and other districts resided in *Ilorin*.

is sacrosanct though evangelic Christianity has grown significantly in the past two decades. Some communities, including segments of this study's second community (5.2.2), also continue to solely practice traditional religion, while others combine both Islam (or Christianity) and traditional.

2.3.3. Schooling in the Emirate: Islamic schooling

Schooling in *Ilorin* Emirate predated colonialism given the activities of Muslim scholars/preachers, such as the aforementioned. However, Islam (and Islamic teaching) was reinforced during the colonial period, between 1900 and 1950, as a result of this scholar's (and his successors') teachings. They taught the Quran, Islamic studies²¹ and Arabic language, and have been credited with the increase of Arabic literacy in the Emirate during that period (some Mallams also acquired English language competencies which enabled them to take up colonial jobs). Moreover, Mallams taught "poetry, grammar, history and methods of teaching" (Danmole, 1980, p. 221) with some introducing European teaching methods²² and practices like the use of a syllabus (to standardize content) and an attendance register; employment of salaried teachers; and fees. Traditionally, Mallams did not charge fees but earned their wages by being given parts of animals slaughtered at various stages of students' studies as well as weekly student donations. Many continued not to charge fees even as others introduced them. In addition to the Mallams, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Tijani Muslim sect operated Islamic schools in *Ilorin* to teach Islam. Moreover, the district heads who moved to their own districts encouraged Mallams to build Islamic schools within them. Towards the end of the colonial period in the late 1950s, Ansarul Islam society was created in *Ilorin* to "give Western education to Muslim children" (Danmole, 1980, p. 237) within the framework of Islamic schooling. In 1946, Ansarul Islam opened *Ilorin*'s first 'Quranic Western' primary school for girls and boys. The society has been a critical force in propagating 'Western education' among Muslims in the Emirate.

2.3.4. Schooling in the Emirate: Colonial and missionary schooling

European (i.e., western) schooling in the Emirate is traceable to attempts by Christian missionaries to set up mission stations and accompanying schools in *Ilorin* town in the mid-1800s (Yahya, 2001). For decades, these attempts proved futile, not unlike challenges encountered by Christian missionaries in other parts of Northern Nigeria, and were primarily due to Muslim resistance and the 'pro-Islam politics' of the Northern Nigeria colonial government (Omenka, 1989). In *Ilorin*, missionaries who applied to build sites were

²¹ These included law and theology (Danmole, 1980). Antoninis (2012) distinguishes *Quranic* schools – which only teach *Arabic* and memorization of the *Quran* – and *Islamiyya* schools – which teach other subjects at levels higher than *Quranic*. Within *Islamiyya*, there are two types: those that teach secular (or European) subjects and those that do not. Both types were present in the Emirate.

²² These are likely to have been modelled after the methods and practices of a provincial government school which opened in *Ilorin* during the colonial period (Danmole, 1980).

allocated land outside its walls by the colonial administration (Danmole, 1980; Yahya, 2001). However, after multiple rejections by successive Emirs and colonial administrators, permission was finally granted within the town and, in 1917, the Anglican Mission built the first primary school for both Christian and non-Christian children. The second primary school in *Ilorin* was built in 1940 by the Roman Catholic Mission, and between 1940 and 1959, seven primary mission schools were established in *Ilorin*. Though mission schools were open to non-Christian children, enrolment was conditioned on conversion to Christianity. Thus, despite their attraction, Muslim parents sent their children to Arabic and Islamic schools and it wasn't until the second wave of schools in the 1940s that parents began to send their children to mission schools (Yahya, 2001).

Contesting the commonly held assumption that Northern Nigeria Emirs were averse to European schooling, Tibenderana (1983) suggests that they were zealous about colonial schools – which they understood would increase the chances of rulership for their male offsprings and close relations – and unconcerned about missionary schools which they believed posed no threat to Muslims “well advanced in the tenets of Islam” but would provide economic and social benefits to their people (p. 528). Apart from the aforementioned religious resistance, Tibenderana attributes the challenges of missionary societies' school establishment in Northern Nigeria to the colonial administration's fears that such schools would produce anti-imperialists, as they had in the South. Repeated requests by various Emirs to establish more schools within their Emirates were denied, often justified by limited financial resources. The denials persisted even when Emirs pleaded to spend their personal funds rather than colonial administration revenue. This evidence suggests that colonial aversion to schooling in Northern Nigeria significantly contributed to the delayed proliferation (and slower uptake) of schooling and in part underpins the persistent challenges of schooling in the region relative to the South. Nevertheless, in *Ilorin*, the first colonial school established was *Ilorin* Provincial School (now Government secondary school) in 1914 (Ogunyemi, 2014). It was followed a year later by *Okesuna* elementary school (Imam, 2020). In 1956, Queen Elizabeth School, the first girls' secondary school in Northern Nigeria, opened in *Ilorin* (Whitehead, 2019). In 1974, the *Kwara* state military government overtook funding responsibility (e.g., salaries, entitlements, pensions, etc.) for the missionary schools in the state, and they became known as grant-aided mission schools (Dahiru, 2021).²³

²³ Muslim-heritage schools such as Ansarul-Islam were also part of this and both Christian and Muslim-origin schools are open to students of all faiths. However, confusion remains about the real ownership of the Christian-heritage schools. Religious clashes occurred in February and March 2021 when some missionary schools, particularly ten SSS in the capital, refused the wearing of hijabs by female Muslim students, arguing that such clothing conflated the schools' Christian heritage. Muslim parents argued that the schools belonged to government and were constitutionally permissive of all religious expressions. The clashes resurfaced a decades-old argument. The state's Christian leaders have twice legally challenged the government over 'their' schools' ownership and lost – the case has now been escalated to the Supreme court (Olufemi, 2021). The 2021 clashes resulted in a closure of the schools from February 19 to April 10.

2.4. The current state of basic education in Kwara

As noted at the end of 2.2, *Kwara* state also faces significant schooling challenges, including those around UBE implementation and teachers' working conditions. Like the rest of Northern Nigeria, much evidence on schooling – much of it quantitative – comes from surveys, research, and monitoring and evaluation activities of international education programs funded by UNICEF, USAID and DFID/FCDO. The evidence presented in this section includes these, newspaper archives and my own fieldwork observations.

Kwara was among the six states in the 2008-2016 DFID-funded ESSPIN program. With ESSPIN support, the state embarked on a reform agenda in 2009 tagged 'every child counts' to improve teacher quality; strengthen inspectorate capacity; reform colleges of education; and build institutions (KSUBEB, 2018). Other aspects such as "improvements in students' instructional materials and books" were also prioritized (p. 56). Baseline ESSPIN surveys on children's learning (2007) and teachers' knowledge (2008) demonstrated extremely weak pupil and teacher numeracy and literacy skills (ESSPIN, 2010). Particularly, the 2008 teacher assessment caused an uproar when it found only 75, or 0.4%, of the state's 19,000 primary and JSS teachers possessed and could apply the requisite knowledge to teach the primary four (P4) English and Mathematics curriculum (Johnson, 2008)²⁴. 259 teachers scored zero while over 50% fell "some way short" of the minimum knowledge benchmark (p. 17). The first survey in 2012 after two years of intervention showed no real improvement: the vast majority of *Kwara's* primary school children were still struggling to cope with grade-level literacy and numeracy tasks (ESSPIN, 2013). By the final survey in 2016, children's learning had worsened, and significantly in the period between the last two surveys in 2014 and 2016,²⁵ as had teachers' subject knowledge in English and Mathematics (Rai & Grover, 2016). Other notable worsened measures included a sharp rise in teacher absenteeism – attributed to teachers' reports of unpaid salaries in the five months leading up to and during the survey period of April to June 2016 – and a stagnation in aggregate measures of head teachers' effectiveness (including the proportion of head teachers taking action on school attendance which saw a significant decline)²⁶.

Moreover, there was greater deprivation in rural schools: they tended to receive less program intervention and had higher teacher-pupil ratios, weaker infrastructure and poorer learning outcomes. The program did record some successes: SBMC functionality had increased while school development planning had improved. Post-ESSPIN, the state rearticulated its persistent challenges: low school enrolment and gender parity, particularly in Northern areas; teachers and education officers with limited capacity; poor

²⁴ Qualification had no effect: those with university degrees performed no better than those with colleges of education (CoEs) certificates (Johnson, 2008).

²⁵ P2 and P4 children were assessed on literacy and numeracy. All scores except P4 literacy, which saw no significant difference, had worsened between 2012 and 2016, and significantly between 2014 and 2016.

²⁶ The 2016 survey suggested the salary defaults undermined school heads' motivation and willingness to act.

infrastructure; and inadequate learning materials (KSUBEB, 2018). Moreover, 30% of its J/SSs needed major repairs, 26% were without a good chalkboard; 61% had insufficient seating; 45% had no source of drinking water; and pupil toilet ratios were more than 150:1 (non-gender disaggregated).

Research commissioned by ESSPIN in 2014 shed further light on the conditions of rural teaching in *Kwara*, suggesting that constraints in rural environments such as separation from family; access to adequate health facilities; security; transportation challenges; increased workload (due to insufficient teachers); frequently absent learners and poor, unschooled parents; and inadequate and irregular remuneration contributed to rural avoidance by some female teachers (Tao, 2014). The study recommended a Rural Teacher Incentive Scheme to address these constraints while also improving teacher recruitment and deployment processes.

Other surveys such as the aforementioned NEDS, supported by USAID, provide UBE and demographic evidence in *Kwara*, particularly for rural areas (see NPC, 2014, 2015). Between 2010 and 2015, 34% *more* rural children spent *less* than 15minutes walking to primary school, and the proportion of children who walked more than 30minutes to school had dropped to zero. Likewise, 21% *more* rural JSS learners spent *less* than 15minutes walking to school between the same period. In urban areas, the data are relatively constant for primary though similar changes over time were revealed for JSS. Though the data could be interpreted as learners who had to walk further dropped out over time, they more likely suggest an increase in JSS and, significantly, primary school accessibility in rural areas. Unsurprisingly, rural primary school attendance rates also increased over the same period, unlike urban ones. The rural net attendance ratio (NAR) increased by 34% (from 52% to 86%) for boys and 30% for girls (57% to 87%). Only 2015 data exist for JSS and the data suggest transition is a challenge across the state: the 2015 NAR for rural boys and girls were 44% and 46% respectively, while for urban boys and girls, 58% and 52%.

The surveys also highlight *Kwara* parents' concerns about UBE quality. 24% were concerned about public school's physical conditions, 33% about overcrowded classrooms, 21% about children's safety, and 25% about teacher performance (similar proportions were found for rural parents). Partly reflecting these concerns, an estimated 31% of *Kwara*'s primary school children were attending private schools in 2015 (NPC, 2015) though research suggests a significant proportion of these children are in urban areas, given the sparsity and poverty of rural *Kwara* (Härmä, 2016). The 2015 NEDS also provides some parental demographic data. On average, 44% of parents have never attended school, the same proportion for those aged between 41 and 60 years. For those 61 and above, the proportion is 94%. Though there is no difference between the proportions of rural and urban fathers who have never attended school, more rural mothers are unschooled: 48%, compared with 42% for urban mothers. Similarly, more urban parents are literate: 38% of urban versus 33% rural mothers; and 70% urban versus 55% rural fathers.

UBE implementation in *Kwara* has been affected by the state's tense relationship with UBEC. Investigative reports suggest UBE implementation ceased since the state accessed its last UBE grant in December 2013 for implementation in 2013-2014 (Alabi, 2020). UBEC records reveal that the state did not receive any grant disbursements for 2015/2016, 2017 and 2018, the only one in such a position (UBEC, 2019). After discovering its mid-2016 disbursement to *Kwara* (for 2015/2016) had been withdrawn for non-UBE purposes, UBEC ordered the state to return the disbursement, of which only 57% was returned. Thus, the state could not access any UBE funding for the years 2015 to 2019 (Alabi, 2020). By 2019, it had some accrued 7.1 billion Naira in frozen grants, the highest among all states in similar situations. In early 2020, *Kwara's* new state government (elected in 2019) alleged it had paid the remaining 43% and earmarked resources for the matching grants – the payment was affirmed by UBEC who noted it still needed to evaluate the use of the 2013 grant before releasing any frozen funds.

Unsurprisingly, the conditions of *Kwara's* primary and J/SSS teachers worsened in 2015 when salaries became irregular and incomplete (“*Kwara NUT Decries*”, 2017). The situation persisted into 2016: teachers reported being owed between one and four months (Fagbemi, 2016) and teachers' union organized a multi-religious prayer session to seek divine intervention, especially those then being owed more than six months (“*Salary Arrears*”, 2016). The situation only marginally improved in 2017 with teachers reportedly being owed four months “in varying degrees of percentages” (“*Kwara NUT decries*”, 2017).

In late 2018, during fieldwork, teachers in both research schools complained vociferously. It was also the period preceding the 2019 Federal (February 23); and state (March 9) elections and the mood across the state was frenzied as the ‘*O to ge*’ (‘enough is enough’) movement to oust the incumbent governor gained momentum. Teachers of different political affiliations attributed their poor working conditions to political corruption and in the weeks leading up to the elections, politics permeated almost all discussions amongst teachers and citizens in the school compound, at hitchhike junctions, and in staff cars, public taxis and tricycles. The dissatisfaction with incumbent political party (which held *all* political posts in the state before the elections) was such that, upon conclusion of both Federal and state elections, it had lost every single seat it contested. By late 2019, during the fieldwork follow-up, although teachers noted an improvement in the regularity of their salaries, they lamented they were still owed their previous arrears.

2.5. Summary

This chapter has reviewed the historical and current schooling landscape in Nigeria and *Kwara*. It has demonstrated a history of Islamic schooling in *Ilorin* Emirate which predated then contended with colonial and missionary schools, a tension which, as this thesis will demonstrate, persists today. It has also shown how interventions by international donors faltered, partly due to heightened levels of fiscal

misappropriation between 2015 and 2018. Though newer administrations have signalled better intentions, the deep decay may take decades to repair, with durable nefarious effects on learners, especially in rural areas. In the next chapter, I broaden the review begun here to examine literature around parents' involvement with children's schooling globally and in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 3. Literature review and conceptual framework

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined the policy, historical, political and current context of schooling in *Kwara* state and, to a lesser extent, Nigeria. This chapter extends this review, focusing on literature around parents and schooling and selected concepts. First, it synthesizes evidence on parents' practices in relation to schooling by examining associations, nuances, definitions and typologies. From these, it selects a typology that will be embedded within the study's conceptual framework. This part also analyzes literature from sub-Saharan Africa to reveal dominant, deficit narratives about parents, especially in rural environments. Second, it discusses the study's conceptual lens, drawing from Sen's capability approach and Bourdieu's social concepts. Finally, it introduces the research questions whose responses will contribute to filling the gap uncovered in the literature review.

Key sources for this chapter emerged from searches on the Open University's physical and online library catalogue (including interlibrary collections), Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar using variations of key terms around parental involvement, capability approach, and Bourdieu's concepts. Snowballing (reference list of key articles) and reverse snowballing (articles citing key articles) were also used to identify historical and current literature. Given the limitedness of the parental involvement literature in [rural] Nigeria, the review includes global reports on education, publications from education interventions, and literature on early childhood education in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.2. Parental involvement in schooling: An overview of literature

Evidence on parents' practices around children's schooling coalesces into literature on parental involvement in schooling, defined by some scholars as parents' commitment of resources (i.e., time, energy and money) to children's schooling (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). The literature centres on practices in more industrialized contexts across North America (mainly US), Europe, and, increasingly, East Asia. Reviews, largely quantitative meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses have repeatedly demonstrated positive associations between parental involvement and overall academic achievement (Barger et al., 2019; Boonk et al., 2018; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Erion, 2006; Higgins & Katsipatakis, 2015; Sebastian et al., 2017; Wilder, 2014). Positive effects have been demonstrated for children in elementary school (Patall et al., 2008; Sylva et al., 2004), middle school (Hill & Tyson, 2009) and across schooling levels (Barger et al., 2019; Boonk et al., 2018; Wilder, 2014).

Parental involvement has also been demonstrated to hold strong positive associations with children's reading (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sénéchal & Young, 2008); and social and emotional characteristics

(Barger et al., 2019; Green et al., 2007; Sheridan et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2020). It is conventionally thought to decline as children progress through school and academic difficulty increases (Henderson et al., 2020). However, some meta-analytical evidence suggests it doesn't necessarily lose effect but that its most effective forms become less direct e.g., high expectations setting (e.g., Boonk et al., 2018); cognitive stimulation, and discussion and encouragement of academic pursuits (Barger et al., 2019); and post-secondary planning (Park & Holloway, 2013).

Others have defined parental involvement as participation in children's schooling (Jeynes, 2007); interactions with children and schools to facilitate academic achievement and future outcomes (Hill et al., 2018); and, more broadly, engagement in children's lives to influence children's overall actions (Kim, 2009). The term is usually conceptualized spatially as sets of activities and behaviours (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994) pursued at home or in school, the two domains which, along with community, most influence children's development and academic achievement (Epstein et al., 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Examples of school-based activities include participation in parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings and other forms of school governance; parent-teacher conferences (to discuss individual children's schooling experiences and performance); parent education workshops and various forms of extra-curricular activities; fundraising; and school volunteering (Barger et al., 2019; Epstein et al., 2002; Hill et al., 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Examples of home-based activities include the creation of a home learning environment (e.g., provision of learning materials and space (Fantuzzo et al., 2004)); cognitive and intellectual stimulation (e.g., through activities and materials (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994)); expression of support, aspirations, values and expectations (SAVEs) (Hill et al., 2018; see Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994)'s *personal involvement* and Jeynes (2007)'s subtle forms comprising parenting style, parent-child communication, and expectations); and socialization in school behaviours (see Hill & Tyson (2009)'s *academic socialization*).

Although some evidence supports the importance of school-based over home-based involvement (e.g., Boonk et al., 2018), more recent evidence shows greater association of the latter with academic achievement (Barger et al., 2019)²⁷. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that subtle home-based forms such as expectations are strongly positively associated with achievement (Boonk et al., 2018; Wilder, 2014). Some suggest that, of all involvement types, SAVEs (underpinned by supportive parenting)²⁸ (Jeynes, 2007,

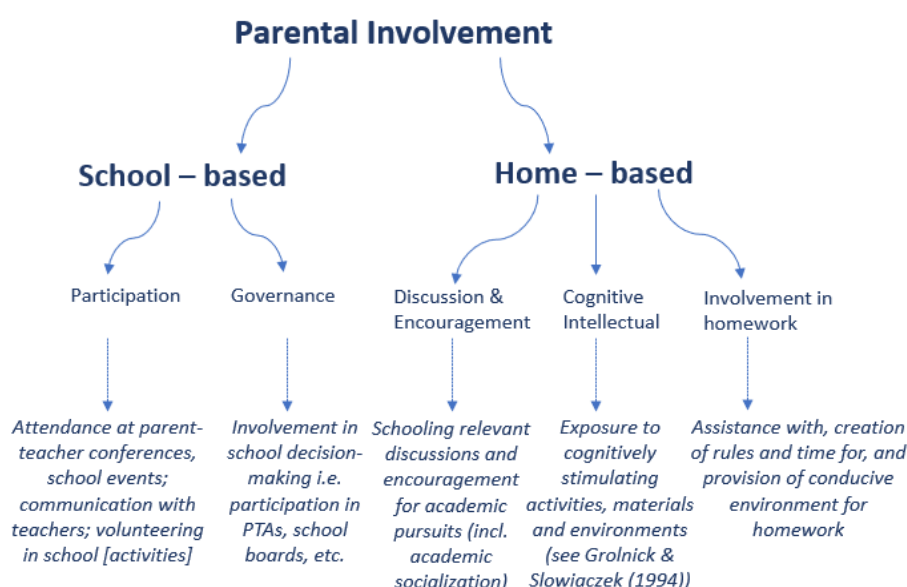
²⁷ Some scholars conceive a 'third', cross-cutting, domain of family-school communication which comprises physical (e.g., bulletins, paper newsletters, etc.), online (e.g., emails, newsletters, websites, etc.) and interactional mediums (e.g., parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, etc.) (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2018; Sheridan et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2020). This evidence is not reviewed here due to space constraints and because it is generally not relevant to this study's contexts (e.g., newsletters, emails, etc.). However, I have incorporated PTAs into school-based involvement.

²⁸ Evidence suggests, for example, that authoritarian parenting styles are associated with poor achievement among non-Hispanic, White and Asian children in North America, Europe, Asia and Middle East but not in North American or European African families where, the study suggests, such styles may more accepted (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018).

2012); learning and behavioural support (Smith et al., 2020); academic socialization (Hill & Tyson, 2009); and expectations (Wilder, 2014) have the greatest positive effect on achievement. Others have demonstrated the effect of SAVEs on different groups. For example, Kim et al. (2020) demonstrate that SAVEs (alongside home and school-based involvement) more strongly positively affect US and European immigrant children's schooling motivation than parents' socio-economic status (SES) or education level.

Adopting Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994)'s definition of parental involvement, Barger et al. (2019) typologize existing conceptualizations of parental involvement as follows:

Figure 3.1 Barger et al. (2019)'s domain-specific involvement typology (thesis illustration)



However, though they include *discussion and encouragement* (i.e., a form of support), they exclude aspirations, values and expectations (AVEs)²⁹, arguing that the latter do not necessarily indicate parents' school commitment (because parents' actions do not always align) and that these inflate the achievement effect. Notwithstanding, their meta-analysis demonstrates that *discussion and encouragement* (support) was more strongly positively associated with secondary learners' engagement than *cognitive intellectual*³⁰. Notably, within the wider literature, the effect of homework on achievement is inconsistent and increasingly negative. Homework's effects have been found to be negative overall (Barger et al., 2019; Driessen et al., 2005; Jeynes, 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2009); positive in elementary school but negative at middle school (Patall et al., 2008); or weakly positive through interventions (Jeynes, 2012). Homework's ineffectiveness has been attributed to parents' lack of training for homework assistance (Wilder, 2014); children's underlying academic struggles (Barger et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2018; Wilder, 2014); and higher

²⁹ AVEs are SAVEs without 'support'. They are used in reference to Barger et al. whose typology already includes 'support'.

³⁰ They test various dimensions of involvement against two categories of children's adjustment (i.e., outcomes) (academic: achievement, engagement, and motivation; and non-academic: social adjustment, emotional adjustment, delinquency).

grades' subject difficulty (Patall et al., 2008). These findings, and the inconsistency of the effect of SES – some show that higher SES children outperform lower ones (Boonk et al., 2018) and others that it, ethnicity, and homework involvement (a proxy for parental education) have no real effect (Barger et al., 2019) –, suggest that despite ethnicity, SES and parents' level of schooling, parents may still effectively support children's schooling by articulating SAVEs.

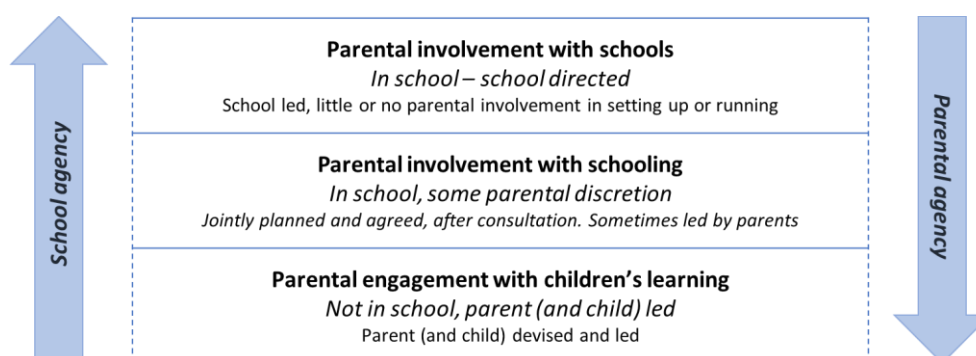
The 448 sources in Barger et al. (2019) include national data from Finland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Korea and Japan, implying that the model is widely applicable. As such, their typology will be used to categorize the range of involvement practices within the study context. However, given the significant economic disadvantage within these contexts, AVEs – which require no tangible resources – are critical. Therefore, this study adapts the typology to include AVEs amongst home-based practices as shown below:

Figure 3.2 Barger et al. (2019)'s typology adapted to include AVEs



Notably, recent evidence of positive effects of parental involvement on children's behaviours and mental health (Barger et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020) underscore its non-academic effects. In the same vein, some scholars have argued for a broadened view of the concept that explores its effects on children's learning beyond school/academic outcomes and values non-schooling centric notions of involvement. Goodall & Montgomery (2014) propose a spectral model in which lies, at one end, involvement (with schools) and at the other, engagement (with learning), with involvement *with schooling* in the middle:

Figure 3.3 Goodall & Montgomery (2014)'s involvement to engagement continuum (adapted)



Learning is conceptualized broadly, incorporating everything a child learns from birth and underpinned by parents' attitudes, aspirations and interests ('and child' in the last row implies children's increasing influence on their learning as they develop). This aligns with the UNESCO definition of learning alluded to in **1.3.1**: the "acquisition or modification of information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or behaviours through experience, practice, study or instruction" (UNESCO-UIS, 2012, p. 7). Thus, moving towards *engagement with learning* shifts agency towards parents, de-centralizing schools as the main sites of learning and schooling as the main form of learning. This continuum is particularly useful for contexts such as this study, where various forms of learning occur, including outside school[ing].

Aligning with Goodall & Montgomery (2014), this thesis conceptualizes *learning* beyond involvement with schools and schooling. Accordingly, it defines *parental engagement* – which includes parental involvement – as parents' commitment of tangible (time, energy, finance) and subtle (SAVEs; and social and cultural capital) resources to children's learning endeavours. However, to minimize confusion, the thesis retains the term *parental involvement* when referring to activities related to formal European-style public schooling (and when discussing the literature around parental involvement) but uses *parental engagement* when referring to other types of activities. Musoke (2016)'s thesis exemplified the concept of *parental engagement*, albeit in more industrialized contexts, where she found that working-class British Ugandan parents enrolled children in cognitive, leisurely, and cultural extra-curricular activities to build children's cultural identities (see also Vincent et al., 2013).

Before exploring other key ideas within the overall parental involvement literature, the next sub-section highlights an increasing sub-area that examines the involvement of non-dominant groups, due to the important insights this evidence offers.

3.2.1. Variations across non-dominant groups

'Non-dominant groups' here refers to those whose perspectives or socio-cultural practices vis-à-vis schooling, do not always align with the dominant normative discourses and practices within their contexts. They include parents with different ethnic, cultural and religious origins; minorities; parents with low SES and/or low literacy and numeracy; rural parents; and travelling parents or those with other 'alternative' lifestyles, among others. A few examples outside the parental involvement literature illustrate these contentions. Budge (2006) argues that the dominant culture in the US does not value rural people who in turn "internalize messages of inferiority" (p. 8). She notes that leadership pedagogies in rural schools tend to neglect issues of importance (to rural students and communities) and separate – rather than connect – schools and communities. Schafft (2016) likewise highlights the peripheral position rural education

occupies in US scholarship and policy, an argument which echoes senses of disadvantaged rural peripheries vis-à-vis dominant metropolises in rural Australian education (Roberts & Cuervo, 2015).

In the UK, minority Roma, Gypsy and [Irish] Traveller (RGT)³¹ populations with a nomadic culture perceived marginalization from the dominant 'settled' population, particularly regarding schooling which many RGT parents believed is designed for 'settled' children (e.g., Bhopal, 2004; Boyle et al., 2020). Other RGT parents were critical of schools' racism, bullying, stereotypes, difficult or irrelevant curriculum, co-education and potential extraction of youth from their culture (e.g., Boyle et al., 2020; Foster & Norton, 2012; Myers et al., 2010). In Australia, Quicke and Biddle (2017) suggest that the dissonance between the practices of marginalized, mobile Indigenous Australians and the requirements of the schooling system are primarily socio-cultural (i.e., curricula relevance, school culture) and psychological (i.e., effect of housing issues and family dynamics on health and wellbeing).

These examples demonstrate that views and practices around schooling are diverse and sometimes contentious, even within highly industrialized contexts with longer histories of schooling. Thus, the increasing attention to non-dominant groups within the parental involvement literature may be partly positioned as a response to the concept's inherent assumptions of dominant, normative white middle-class perspectives and practices around schooling (e.g., Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Schneider & Arnot, 2018; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). The non-dominant groups that feature strongly are minorities, immigrants and low-SES (many of whom are minorities or immigrants) parents. Evidence on them provides further insight on the diversity of parental involvement, facilitated by the greater qualitative nature of this evidence. This evidence highlights the barriers faced and the unrecognized strategies employed by these groups. For instance, though some studies could not demonstrate an effect of parental involvement on achievement for minority US (Gutman & Midgley, 2000) and Dutch (Driessen et al., 2005) children; others suggest its positive effect persists for African (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Jeynes, 2005, 2016); Latinx³² (Jeynes, 2017); and Asian Americans (Barger et al., 2019; Jeynes, 2003, 2007). This persistence has caused some to posit the potential of parental involvement for narrowing the achievement gap between European American and some minority and immigrant groups (LaRocque et al., 2011). Interestingly, Jeynes (2003) found that African American and Latinx American youth are more likely to benefit from parental involvement, broadly conceived, than Asian Americans despite higher evidence of involvement among the latter. For him, this may be due to other strategies employed by Asian Americans and the greater incidence of single parenthood within African and Latinx American families.

³¹ As commonly used in the literature.

³² Gender-neutral term for Latino/a

However, this perspective ignores the school-level barriers (particularly to school-based involvement) faced by some minority, immigrant and other families (Kim, 2009). It also disavows the unconventional strategies they pursue – i.e., outside homework help, cognitive stimulation or school participation (Jeynes, 2003) – and ignores cultural beliefs which render certain strategies more amenable (Hill et al., 2018). For instance, Gonzalez et al. (2018) found that family contexts, culturally scripted notions of home versus school-based involvement, and [language] barriers constrained Latinx American parents' overall involvement. Others revealed how African and Latinx American (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Beard & Brown, 2008; Henderson et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2018; Park & Holloway, 2013), US African (Dryden-Peterson, 2018), British Eastern European (Schneider & Arnot, 2018) and British South Asian (Crozier & Davies, 2006) parents focus on home-based, or reduce school-based, involvement, given school-based experiences of racism, discrimination and stereotypes.

For some (and perhaps, many) immigrant parents, host-country constraints such as non-proficiency in school languages and unfamiliarity with the schooling system further limits access to knowledge and information (e.g., Antony-Newman, 2019; Schneider & Arnot, 2018). For these same groups and others (e.g., Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2018), socio-economic pressures brought on by low job security constrained availability and, therefore, involvement in schools. Alongside linguistic and time constraints are limited and varied understandings of host-country schooling systems as well as expectations of involvement and legal status issues (resulting in fear of public appearances) (Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Such parents' low educational cultural capital – knowledge of school style, dispositions, norms, etc. – contributes to their employment of strategies outside of, and therefore invisible to, schools (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

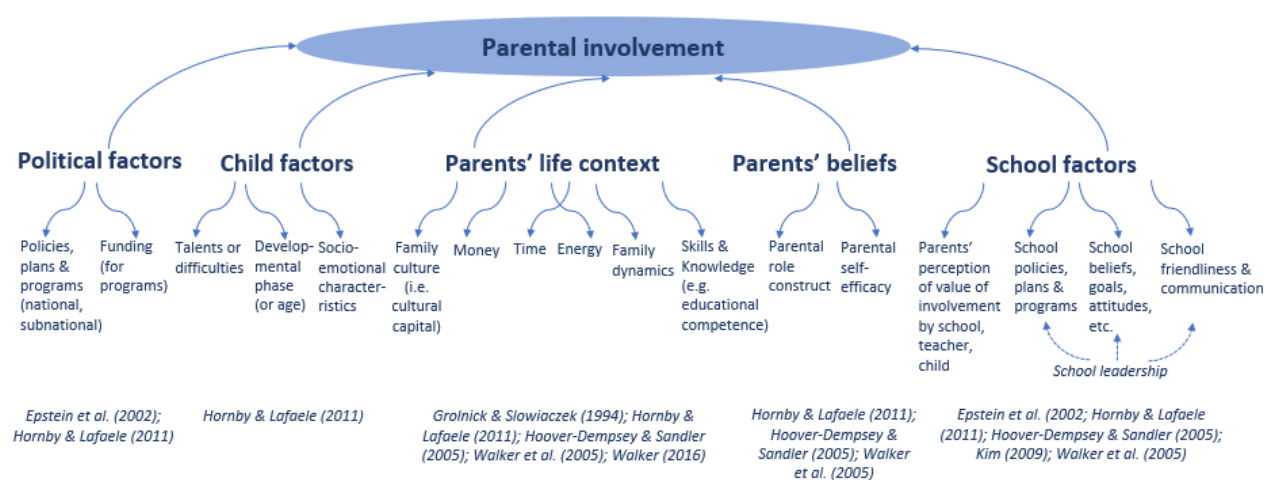
Studies have corroborated this group of parents' negative school experiences, demonstrating that teachers' assessments favoured learners of parents perceived as more involved (Ho & Cherng, 2018). Moreover, negative experiences may not be mediated by wealth as even high SES minority and immigrant groups experience schools' deficit perceptions and racism (Beard & Brown, 2008; Kim, 2009; Vincent et al., 2012). In addition to schools' views about parents' capabilities and efficacy, other school-level barriers include teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of involvement; teachers' self-efficacy beliefs; school friendliness and communication; diversity of involvement programs; school-level policies; and school leadership (Kim, 2009). Notably, evidence suggests that some African American parents pursue strategies to resist (Cooper, 2009; Hill et al. 2018) and protect (Moultrie, 2016) children against structural and racial discrimination in the education system. In the UK, Black British parents implement similar protectionist strategies outside of schools (Vincent et al., 2013).

As will be shown later in **3.3.2**, rural sub-Saharan African parents' involvement is similarly contested by school-level barriers as well as the challenging contexts of their own lives. However, this review does not claim that minority, immigrant and low-SES parents are analogous to disadvantaged rural *Yorùbá* parents in Nigeria – the latter part of the review synthesizes evidence regarding rural sub-Saharan African parents, with whom rural *Yorùbá* parents arguably have more in common. Instead, it highlights the experiences of groups who, like rural African parents and the rural *Yorùbá* parents of this study, are socio-culturally marginalized – vis-à-vis dominant schooling perspectives and practices – within their contexts. Critiques of the parental involvement literature notwithstanding, the literature offers the clearest conceptualization of the range of involvement practices, an understanding critical to answering the study's research questions.

3.2.2. Influencing factors on parental involvement

The preceding has hinted at some factors which influence parental involvement (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2018; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Kim, 2009). A deeper exploration of the literature suggests the following five factors:

Figure 3.4 Influences on parental involvement



Hornby & Lafaele (2011)'s factors of class, ethnicity and gender (included under a broad group of parent factors here subdivided into *life context* and *beliefs*) are excluded, given strong evidence of their non-effect (on academic achievement) and their relative closeness to family culture (Gonzalez et al., 2018; Walker, 2016). Role construction is parents' beliefs about what they should do regarding (or who holds responsibility for) schooling while self-efficacy refers to beliefs about the capability to produce desired schooling outcomes for children, the latter influencing parents' goals and agency (Alkire, 2008a; Walker et al., 2005). Self-efficacy, moreover, underscores the bidirectional relationship between beliefs and behaviour: beliefs shape behaviour while behaviour requires understanding the beliefs that guide action.

Thus far, this review has explored evidence from more industrialized contexts. For parents of public-school children in less industrialized countries, broader societal factors are arguably different. A small but growing literature is beginning to shed light on involvement in these contexts. Parental involvement is posited as a potential mitigator for pervasive challenges of schooling (Kim, 2018), including poor public schooling quality; weak policy implementation (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001); negative impact of corruption on education expenditure (Sahnoun & Abdennadher, 2020); and high levels of poverty. However, conceptualizations of involvement are limited. Those that exist employ, rather than adapt, US-centric frameworks or seek to develop contextually appropriate ones. Illustratively, a review of qualitative research on parental involvement in less industrialized contexts (Kim, 2018) – 18 studies, eight on sub-Saharan Africa, one on urban Nigeria – demonstrates that, despite findings around parents’ attitudes, social and cultural resources, and the policy environment, most studies applied Epstein et al. (2002)’s US-centric framework³³ which presupposes a minimum threshold of school quality.

Among the review’s conclusions were parents’ deference to schools due to their beliefs that schools should *also* develop children’s morality³⁴; studies’ inattention to home learning environments and distance to school; and studies’ excessive focus on individual achievement rather than collective goals around schooling quality. Notably, Tusiime et al. (2016) and Friedlander (2020)’s primarily quantitative study in rural Rwanda offers some view of children’s home learning. It suggests that *family learning (including support provided by siblings)*, *parents’ literacy competency* and *child’s interest* significantly predicted children’s reading skills, along with home *reading materials*, albeit to a lesser extent. *Religious reading activities*, though correlated with the other factors, had no effect. These factors, reflective of a home literacy ecology (Friedlander, 2020), resonate with Kim (2018)’s call for more contextually appropriate frameworks which account for exosystems (parents’ life contexts and social capital; and education policy contexts) and macrosystems (culture and beliefs; economic opportunity structures). However, the study neither explores parents’ life context (beyond their literacy abilities) nor their learning beliefs. In the next part of this review, I focus on literature from sub-Saharan Africa.

3.3. Parents perspectives on and involvement in schooling: Sub-Saharan Africa

3.3.1. Dominant narratives

³³ The framework, designed for school-led parental involvement interventions, comprises six dimensions: parenting, communicating, volunteering, home learning, decision making and collaborating with the community.

³⁴ The review suggests these parents are *more* deferential than minorities in industrialized contexts, but similar deferential patterns have been observed in North America amongst African immigrants (e.g., Dryden-Peterson, 2018) and Latinx Americans (Gonzalez et al., 2018).

Within the broader literature on schooling in sub-Saharan Africa, parents' perspectives are constructed in two dominant ways. The first is through a missing narrative, evidenced by literature which tokenistically alludes to parents' perspectives; partially alludes to parents' perspectives through explorations of community participation in schools, PTAs or school[-based] [management] committees (S[B][M]Cs); and explores parents' perspectives through students' quantitative ratings of parental involvement. The second is a deficit narrative, evidenced in literature where parents' perspectives and practices are deemed deficient by educators, officials and even students.

There are various examples of the first. The 2017/18 UNESCO GEM report classified parents as stakeholders responsible for children's "attendance, effort and behaviour," who are to "meet with teachers, follow school instructions and... participate in school life" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 87). Similarly, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, in a synthesis of its 2017 Triennale, acknowledged parents' relevance, then recommended the transformation of their practices so they can "acquire new skills oriented towards the success of learning for all" (ADEA, 2017, p. 78). In both reports, these tokenistic allusions paved the way for the prescription of preferred actions for parents to follow. However, neither provided insight into parents' own perspectives on their responsibilities or practices around schooling, despite well-cited evidence suggesting that parents, particularly in rural environments, role construct teachers as primarily responsible for schooling (Pryor, 2005).

In post-apartheid South Africa, a 1996 Schools Act mandated the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which must include parents, school heads, educators, non-teaching staff and learners (for secondary schools) (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Mncube 2010). Parents must also comprise the largest proportion of members and a parent must be chairperson. Studies examining SGBs' functionality have provided snapshots of parents' perspectives. Parents reported limited understanding of SGB roles and responsibilities; and that participation favours the linguistically competent (i.e., in English) who are sufficiently skilled, can attend scheduled meetings, and feel welcomed in schools (Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). Some even suggested SGBs perpetuated apartheid-era practices which excluded Black parents (Mncube, 2007), and the constraints highlighted by rural and working-class parents were particularly strong (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004). Similarly, in Ghana, the 1995 Education Services Act mandated the creation of SMCs whose membership was to comprise individuals from the district education office, school, school-community and PTA, and which had responsibilities for school policy, school development, administration and finance (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011). Later explorations of community participation in schooling found SMC parents were typically more educated or influential, less critical of and thus more compliant with schools (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011).

Likewise, in Nigeria, SBMCs were dominated by the influential (Poulsen, 2009; Poulsen, 2018)³⁵ while PTAs were weakly representative of women, marginalized groups and less influential parents (Dunne et al., 2013). Notably, SBMCs weakly represent parents, given their multi-stakeholder constitution (i.e., reducing the total number of parents) and their parent demographic (i.e., those most influential). Where SMCs did constitute high proportions of parents, e.g., in a study of involvement in Kenya (Kimu & Steyn, 2013), parents' influence remained limited. Moreover, most studies on involvement in Nigeria typically examine correlations between academic achievement and students' ratings of parents' involvement (e.g., Adetayo & Kiadese, 2011; Fajoku et al., 2016, etc.) (most find positive associations), with few surveying parents themselves (e.g., Fasina, 2011). This partial representation – and selection of certain types – of parents in school governing councils, and students' ratings of parents – rather than parents speaking for themselves – perpetuates the exclusion of parents' voices.

There are also various examples of the second. In Zimbabwe, teachers reported parents' lack of interest in schooling limited teachers' efforts (Mukwambo, 2019). In South Africa, parents' articulation of constraints to SGB participation were re-presented as complaints. On SGBs and school involvement, teachers, school heads and learners were critical of parents who did not understand their roles, responsibilities and expectations (Hartell et al., 2016; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Mncube, 2007); were non-literate or minimally formally educated (Hartell et al., 2016; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Mncube, 2007; Singh et al., 2004); lived far from school (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004); or lacked time (Bojuwoye, 2009; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004), school linguistic competence (Michael et al., 2012; Mncube, 2007; Singh et al., 2004) and participation skills (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). In a multi-country study, teachers in Kenya and Ghana believed non-literate rural parents were 'ignorant' of the value of education (see Serpell (1993)'s ignorant conservatism), with some suggesting that children's uncleanness reflected parents' lack of enforcement of hygiene at home (Buckler, 2012). Compensating for such deficiencies, Kenyan, Ghanaian and South African teachers exposed learners to lives and opportunities outside rural communities (Buckler, 2012). In Kenya, teachers did not consider parents sufficiently competent to contribute to classroom learning activities (e.g., telling stories, teaching a skill, etc.) or the organization of extra-curricular sports and cultural events (Kimu & Steyn, 2013). In the rural Rwandan study of home literacy environments mentioned earlier, a father's perception of his role in schooling – to buy children books – vis-à-vis teachers' – to teach – was interpreted as a lack of concern for learning (Tusiime et al., 2016).

³⁵ ESSPIN-commissioned research, with ten schools from Lagos and five Northwestern states. Its findings are somewhat contradicted by later research which concluded that SBMCs, though infrequently re-constituted, adequately represented women (Little & Pinnock, 2014), a finding which possibly reflects continued intervention support to SBMCs studied.

Deficit depictions around school involvement were linked to those about broader parenting. Kenyan teachers reported that children who had behavioural and academic challenges had uninvolved and poor parents (Kimu & Steyn, 2013). A South African study concluded that “many parents did not seem to understand their role as parents” even as it acknowledged that “eighty percent of parents... constantly spoke about their different domestic problems” (Singh et al., 2004, p. 303). In Ghana, school administrators admonished parents whom they thought preferred to spend money on parties, weddings and funerals while neglecting food, school fees and supplies (Donkor, 2010). In Northern Nigeria, for teachers, local officials and even SBMC members, parents – particularly those with children out-of-school or with fledgling attendance in rural areas, who had little or no literacy or numeracy abilities themselves – had no value for education and were, thus, ignorant and unenlightened (Cameron et al., 2018; Dunne et al., 2013; Little & Lewis, 2012; Pinnock, 2012). In rural Zambia, officials believed parents who involved children in economic activities, e.g., fishing, farming, rather than schooling sabotaged their children’s future (Serpell, 1993). Although deficit views in the literature are usually perpetuated by non-parents, they are sometimes perpetuated by researchers, as the South African and Rwandan studies demonstrate.

Less explicit deficit narratives are visible in global reports which issue directives or recommend parental training, awareness increase or capacity building, for instance, the GEM and ADEA reports highlighted earlier. Similarly, the World Bank Group’s World Development Report 2018 recommended the need to build parents’/caregivers’ capacity – to “substantially improve children’s outcomes” – and improve parenting, particularly “when beliefs or norms are detrimental” (World Bank, 2018, p. 115).

The pervasiveness of these dominant narratives suggests that all parents must value schooling. In Nigeria, this precept persists even amidst evidence suggesting parents have reasons not to value schooling (Dunne et al., 2013; Humphreys & Crawford, 2014) and that schooling, in Nigeria and other contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, has little delivered on promises of poverty reduction through employment and economic growth (Datzberger, 2018; Kendall, 2007; Palmer et al., 2007; Serpell, 1993). Moreover, deficit assessments of parents’ practices are made relative to educational cultural capital (**3.2.1**) which parents, particularly rural ones, may have little of or deem incongruent with their realities. Such assessments focus on what such parents do not do rather than identify enabling perspectives and practices or funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) upon which schools may draw. Nevertheless, parents’ elucidation of schooling constraints suggests the need to interrogate how normative schooling expectations interact with parents’ lives in context, and how these everyday lives influence parents’ schooling perspectives. Rather than omit parents’ perspectives or subject them to deficit portrayals, this study explores these perspectives and interrogates the complexities underpinning them. By doing so, the study contributes to a smaller set of literature which has done the same. These are subsequently discussed.

3.3.2. Parents' voices

As hinted earlier, within some deficit narratives are echoes of parents' own perspectives, further explored by some scholars intentionally. On the one hand, the assumption that parents do not value schooling overlooks evidence demonstrating that many – even in rural contexts – do. Reasons include aspirations of better futures for children (Loomis & Akkari 2012); promises of future wage employment (Donkor, 2010; Dunne et al., 2013; Marvin, 1975; Serpell, 1993; Sunal et al., 2003) and relatedly, colonial language competencies (Marvin, 1975; Trudell, 2007); perception of schooling as a religious duty and as an act of Godly obedience, and a desire to prevent children from the humiliation of illiteracy (Donkor, 2010; Spernes, 2011); parents' own schooling struggles in racist regimes (Tucker et al., 2008); and a perception of its inculcation of useful skills for families and communities (Dunne et al., 2013). On the other hand, the constructed deficit narratives hitherto discussed suggest that for many parents schooling has belied their expectations in the ways outlined next.

Schooling as extractive

Research into beliefs about early childhood education in Madagascar discovered that schools, as state representations, became spaces of manifestation of existing suspicions between parents and state, and that parents perceived a disconnect between their cultures and schools (Loomis & Akkari, 2012). Though parents believed schooling promised an escape from poverty, they saw it not as a “way to develop the community from within, but as a tool for individual advancement which forcibly removes children from the community” (Loomis & Akkari, 2012, p. 94). This extractive perspective of schooling (i.e., in the pursuit of jobs usually located outside such communities) has also been evoked in other parts of Africa, such as rural Zambia (Serpell, 1993).

Schooling as a poor economic investment

In rural fishing communities in Tanzania, parents perceived little value in schooling which did not equip children with culturally-defined economic skills (fishing, farming) and possessions (fishing boat, palm oil trees or a shop) (Wabike, 2012). These concerns were echoed by parents in a rural fishing community in Malawi (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). In rural Zimbabwe, diamond mining and food vending in diamond fields, though unstable and dangerous, were viewed as more effectively alleviating poverty than schooling; thus, parents either encouraged or supported children's decisions to dropout (Mukwambo, 2019). This suggests some parents value schooling economically and in real-time, often relative to the prevailing economic structures in their environment which require a lower temporal investment before the realization of gains. Such gains are perceived as more real than the imagined (potential) future gains from schooling, particularly in countries like Nigeria and South Africa where unemployment is pervasive (Dunne et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2004; Sunal et al., 2003). In parts of Northern Nigeria, an economic, real-time

valuation of schooling (as low value) overrides even religious concerns amongst Muslim parents (Dunne et al., 2013) who have traditionally held fears of schools converting children to Christianity or teaching non-Islamic values (Csapo, 1981; Niles, 1989). In other parts of Northern Nigeria, the availability of odd jobs in urban areas disrupts school attendance and fuels dropout (Bano, 2020). As noted earlier, some parents do believe schooling provides strong opportunities for children's future economic advancement. However, the evidence here indicates that, for many others, schooling is valued relative to real-time economic trade-offs, nearly all of which are perceived to have a lower opportunity cost than schooling.

Schooling as poor quality

As Dunne et al. (2013) allude to, apathy towards schooling among certain parents (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) is due, in part, to quality concerns. Studies from other parts of Nigeria have corroborated this, suggesting reasons for the perceived poor quality: poor teacher/head teacher performance, teacher absenteeism, corporal punishment, school bullying or violence, overcrowded classrooms, poor physical infrastructure and lack of school resources (Dunne et al., 2013; Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; NPC, 2015; NPC & RTI International, 2011; Sunal et al., 2003). For some parents, only the smartest children could thrive under such conditions (Sunal et al., 2003). Unsurprisingly, public school quality concerns in Nigeria (and specifically, *Kwara* (Härmä, 2016)) are such that parents are increasingly turning to private schools with even poor parents turning to low-fee private schools (Dunne et al., 2013; Härmä, 2013; Humphreys & Crawford, 2014). Interestingly, the proportion of public school parents concerned about [head]teachers' performances has increased over time (between 2010 and 2015) while that of those concerned about physical infrastructure has decreased, as alluded to in **2.4** (NPC, 2015; NPC & RTI International, 2011). Public schooling quality concerns have also been observed in other high unemployment contexts such as South Africa (Singh et al., 2004), in other parts of Africa (Palmer et al., 2007), and in other less industrialized parts of the world (Save the Children, 2013).

Schools as unwelcoming spaces

Like the non-dominant parents in more industrialized contexts (**3.2.1**), parents, particularly rural ones, self-exclude from the physical school space when they feel unwelcome. In South Africa, Black rural parents chose not to visit schools because of perceptions of being judged "unfit" by "coloured" teachers (Tucker et al., 2008, p. 70). In Kenya, parents deemed unskilled and uninvited to school events consequently felt unwelcome at such events while struggling parents who could not afford to pay school fees felt embarrassed to approach schools about their financial situations (Kimu & Steyn, 2013). Parents' apprehension of the school space due to feeling unwelcome has also been identified in South Africa (Bojuwoye, 2009; Lemmer, 2007).

Schooling as incongruent with preferred behaviours

Serpell (1993) argues that complexities arise when schooling – and its cultural characteristics – is introduced to children and communities with different social, cultural and religious practices. His study (of rural Zambia), and various others, has elicited parents' concerns with schooling's incongruence with local ways of life, values and behaviours. In Northern Nigeria, parents perceive public Western schools have "corrupting influences" on local cultures (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 114; Harber, 1984). Unlike religious schools, formal schools do not teach values, a form of deceit ('*boko'*) which results in political and moral corruption among the schooled (Akanji, 2020). Moreover, schooling is perceived as disrupting traditional values such as early marriage while its co-educational structure purportedly breeds prostitution among youth (Akanji, 2013). In Cameroon, non-Christian Kom communities rejected Catholic mission schools which transmitted knowledge and values that communities believed would destroy their culture (Trudell, 2007). In the Tanzanian study referenced earlier, culturally organized, economic ways of life (fishing and agriculture) – where fathers fished at night and slept during daytime; and mothers slept at night and sold fish and farm produce during daytime – contested children's daytime school attendance and post-school parent-guided homework completion (Wabike, 2012). For Northern Nigeria's nomadic Fulani, incongruence manifests in the conflict between morning schooling attendance and animal grazing; school's mixed-gender norms and Fulani single-sex socialization; school curriculum and traditional Fulani education; and schooling's extractive occupations and parents' preferred occupational trajectory (Usman, 2006).

Such parents – who perceive an inevitability of schooling but still highly value traditional norms and behaviour – struggle to adjust to an external schooling model while preserving their traditional values (Ntarangwi, 2012). Reflective of this struggle are the dualistic expectations some parents place on schooling. In peri-urban Ghana, parents perceived preschools as spaces both of academic development *and* behavioural socialization; and wanted children to learn English at pre-school but speak their local language at home (Kabay et al., 2017). In another Ghanaian study, pre-school children whose parents had been informed of a teacher training initiative performed weaker on literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional development measures than those whose parents had not (Wolf et al., 2018). Further interrogation revealed informed parents were concerned about the training's weak child behavioural management, suggesting they may have responded by reinforcing certain disciplinary approaches at home. Similarly, in South Africa, schooling contended with children's discipline and moral growth for parents who perceived homework "interfered with what [they] wanted to teach their children" (Singh et al., 2004, p. 305). In Tanzania, parents' perspectives on important schooling traits – social responsibility (e.g., respect, obedience, attentive listening – diverged from teachers' – individual competencies e.g., curiosity, self-direction, and self-belief) (Jukes et al., 2018). These texts demonstrate that an assumption that parents do not value schooling conceals complexities which render schooling dissatisfying, impracticable, or just one amongst other endeavors perceived as beneficial for children.

3.3.3. From schooling perspectives to involvement

For parents who appear to value schooling, little is known about their involvement, or practices relevant to schooling. In urban contexts, the focus of much of what is known, evidence suggests that the path from perspectives to practices is relatively straightforward. In Nigeria, literate, urban, middle-class Nigerian mothers perceived themselves as advocates and “worked to structure, foster, [and] support their children’s learning” in multiple ways (Anyikwa & Obidike, 2012, p. 64). Alongside conventional ‘school-centric’ involvement – e.g., progress monitoring, homework assistance – mothers, similar to the dominant class in more industrialized contexts, transmitted educational cultural capital through educational board games; event planning and speech writing; recipe reading or home spelling; library or zoo visits; and watching literacy programs on TV. In urban North west Nigeria, parents at a high performing primary school not only visited the school and attended meetings, they also encouraged children’s academics, expressed high expectations, self-modelled hard work, and used [dis]incentives to reward or punish strong/weak academic performance (Ibrahim & Jamil, 2012).

In less urban contexts, the path from perspectives to practices appears less direct, suggesting parents either underrate the complexities of adjustment (i.e., to a formal public schooling model) or struggle to navigate their own complex life contexts alongside schooling’s demands. Evidence suggests that both elements may be at play. In Ghana, peri-urban, low SES parents’ practices were mediated by their dedication to their traditional lives, suggesting a contention between parents’ declaration of a high valuing of schooling and their actualization; i.e., through economic capital investments in schooling (Donkor, 2010). In South Africa and Kenya, some parents were too exhausted after work to assist with homework (Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Stephinah, 2014) while low SES, divorce (or separation) and unemployment constrained other parents’ capacity to provide basic schooling necessities (Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Lemmer, 2007; Singh et al., 2004). Likewise, in rural Rwanda, parents’ role constructs (as parents, not teachers), limited understanding of schooling involvement, while poverty-induced household burdens appeared to influence the capability for involvement beyond provision of food, fees and other supplies (Tusiime et al., 2016). Similar role constructs limited parents’ visits to schools – regarded as teachers’ spaces – in Kenya (Kimu & Steyn, 2013) and Nigeria (Ibrahim & Jamil, 2012), while others were frustrated by schools’ technical jargon (Singh et al., 2004).

Evidence on parental involvement, and by extension, engagement, is limited in rural sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, this paucity is more pronounced, particularly in relation to qualitative evidence. As Marphatia et al. (2010, p. 10) concede, the dearth of research around parental involvement in less industrialized contexts implies an “urgent need” to better understand parents’ perspectives on schooling as these may be linked to children’s completion and achievement. Given the persistent positive effects of involvement on

children's school learning, research on involvement in contexts where it holds significant promise is critical. Though the current review offers glimpses of parents' views, as already noted, much of these have been extracted from studies with varied aims, as very few studies have primarily focused on eliciting parents' perspectives. Fewer still have examined, in addition to perspectives, the range of practices parents undertake as they involve themselves in their children's schooling.

Thus, in addition to generating in-depth insight on rural Nigerian parents' perspectives on schooling, this study significantly contributes to the evidence base around their involvement with schooling. Doing this, however, requires the application of relevant conceptual tools to deepen the responses to the research questions. Before introducing those questions, the next three sections explore these concepts. The first, drawing on the capability approach, discusses a values-based perspective that seeks to elicit what people value and their actions to actualize these. The second, drawing from Bourdieu's social theory, elucidates the relational concepts which underpin what people do and value within their social structures. The third justifies their combination within the study's conceptual framework.

3.4. The capability approach

This study draws from the capability approach, particularly concepts of capabilities and agency, to explore participants' views about and actions around schooling. The capability approach was developed by economist philosopher Amartya Sen in the late 1980s to broaden human capital views of human development, which he felt focused too narrowly on increasing gross domestic product (GDP), personal wealth, industrialization, or technological advancement. Rather, he argued, development should "expand the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999, p. 3) where such freedom facilitates (as a means) and is the outcome (the end) of development processes. Freedom³⁶, in Sen's view, is linked to deprivation: expanding freedoms helps reduce deprivations like poverty, famine, civil unfreedom, sexism, environmental degradation, etc. Thus, evaluating development or progress in society requires evaluating the extent to which people's real freedoms (not imagined or unattainable) to counter deprivations have been increased, particularly through social processes (Sen, 1999). By amplifying people's ability to help themselves and impact society, freedom is the "principal determinant of individual initiative and social effectiveness (p. 18)".

Economist philosopher Martha Nussbaum has further theorized the capability approach as a partial theory of justice (Nussbaum, 2011). She developed a list of ten central human capabilities she believes

³⁶ Sen (1999) lists five instrumental freedoms which enhance one's capability: political freedoms; economic facilities; social arrangements (e.g., education, healthcare, etc.); transparency guarantees and protective security.

governments should guarantee their citizens to a minimum threshold³⁷. This led to a debate, where Nussbaum argued for, and Sen against, the selection of such a list (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 2004). Sen's opposition reflected his view of the context-specificity of the value judgements that underpin capabilities, a condition which presupposes a procedural, social and democratic process of selection (Sen, 2004). The debate has since settled and the approach remains open, underspecified, and amenable to diverse disciplines, applications, analyses and theorization (Robeyns, 2017)³⁸. For these reasons, in this thesis I use Sen's version of the approach and draw on some of his key proponents to elucidate core concepts.

*Capability*³⁹ is the freedom to pursue or achieve what one values being or doing, where those valued beings and doings, or *functionings*, constitute wellbeing⁴⁰ (Alkire, 2005a, p. 1; Sen, 1985, p. 197, 201). Because the life one desires to live typically constitutes a range of valued beings and doings both elementary and auxiliary (e.g., being well nourished, being sheltered, being clothed, attending a selective private school, having positive relationships, etc.), *capabilities* refer to combinations of functionings. A person's current [state of] being and doing, therefore, represents their "realized functionings" or "functioning vector" (Sen, 1999, p. 75), i.e., what the person has "successfully pursued and realized" (Alkire, 2005b, p. 120). Capabilities are what people *can* be or do while achieved functionings are what people *are* being or doing (henceforth, *valuable* or *valued* functionings are written as 'functionings' while achieved functionings are written as 'achieved/realized functionings'). The various functioning vectors from which a person can choose constitute their *capability set* (Sen, 1985, 1995, 1999).

Analytically, capabilities generally take precedence over functionings (see also Unterhalter & Walker (2007)), resources (convertible to capabilities) or utility (happiness or fulfilment of preferences) because they constitute 1) freedoms (opportunities or options one values); and 2) agency (the ability to pursue or achieve chosen valued opportunities beyond one's wellbeing) (Alkire, 2005a; see also Deneulin & Stewart, 2002). Freedoms reflect availability of (and accessibility to (Robeyns, 2017)) opportunities. Sen's earlier writings were more explicit about this, defining capability not only as the freedom to live a particular life but also to "...choose from *possible livings*" (Sen, 1995, p. 40). Sen's view of freedom also includes the

³⁷ Bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2011).

³⁸ Though this openness and underspecificity and their accordant flexibility is advantageous, they result in ambiguities and inconsistencies around the usage of certain key terms, sometimes by Sen himself (e.g., capability or capabilities or capability sets; functionings or valued/achieved functionings, etc.).

³⁹ Freedom synonymizes *capability* as Sen defines freedom as the "individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value" (Sen, 1999, p. 56; see also p. 74). Sen uses both terms interchangeably (Alkire, 2002) though, in some works, uses freedom more frequently.

⁴⁰ Wellbeing is the "quality (or well-ness) of a person's being" (Sen, 1995, p. 39). Functionings is used more explicitly to define wellbeing in earlier works, where well-being is a person's achieve functioning vector (Sen, 1985) or the "ability to achieve valuable functionings" (Sen, 1985, p. 200). Evaluating well-being thus requires assessing functionings (Sen, 1995) and their capabilities.

processes (systems, structures, etc.) that enable the freedom to *choose* – among available opportunities – and *act* – to realize chosen opportunities (1999, 2009). However, choice is not only instrumental to opportunities, it may also be an intrinsically valued being and doing (Sen, 1999).

Choice is evident in and evaluated through action or *agency*, the freedom to pursue and achieve valued goals not limited to one's wellbeing (Sen, 1995). Illustrating this is Sen's highly cited example of two individuals who do not eat. One, a wealthy person who fasts and the other, an impoverished person who starves. Both become undernourished but while the former *chooses* not to eat, the latter *is forced* not to. Both achieve the same functioning though with different capabilities, and the latter's choice, and in this case, action is highly constrained. All choices are constrained to some extent (Robeyns, 2017) but the type of constrained choice which fosters or deepens deprivation, such as that of the starving person, is connected to the notion of adaptive preferences, preferences brought about by an expansion or contraction of one's capability set (Bruckner, 2009). Under contraction, adaptive preferences form or "develop under conditions non-conducive to basic flourishing" and are expected to be changed under more conducive conditions (Khader, 2011, p. 17). For Khader (2013), they are deprivation-perpetuating behaviours and beliefs that comprise multiple forms including *forced trade-offs* which are articulated or pursued when current conditions prevent an expression of "sufficient value" for, and therefore the pursuit of, valued options (Khader, 2013, p. 318). Capability analyses necessarily encompass an examination of opportunities and the exercise of choice (Sen, 1985), including where preferences may be adapted. However, not all preferences are adapted and to mitigate misidentification, Khader (2011) recommends moving beyond information about preferences (i.e., what people do) to dialoging with people about why they make their preferences.

As shown, agency includes one's pursuits and choices (Sen, 1985) and an agent is "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged [at least] in terms of her own values and objectives" (Sen, 1999, p. 19). Agents pursue valued agency goals. For example, a parent may choose and pursue *parental goals* (i.e., *goals on behalf of child*) to achieve the functioning of child being formally educated towards the child's wellbeing. This may then act – albeit indirectly – on the parent's wellbeing through the pride associated with being the parent of an educated child, the satisfaction of parental duty accomplishment, and the benefits expected from the child's future educational outcomes. Understanding agency, thus, requires understanding a person's "aims, objectives, allegiances, obligations, and...conception of the good" (Sen, 1985, p. 203). Of evaluative interest, therefore, are a person's agency *freedom* and agency *achievement* (Sen, 2009), the former incorporating the broadened view of freedom discussed earlier which includes the freedom to choose (which to pursue among one's goals); and the latter concerning the degree of success in the pursuit of these goals (Sen, 1995).

Individuals, as agents, may also pursue aims that fulfil the interest/wellbeing of others, as already noted, while goals may be defined by groups or collectives (Kabeer, 1999) towards collective or individual action. The use of *others* is worth clarifying. Alkire (2008a) uses *other-regarding goals* for goals (e.g., charitable or activism) which do not directly or primarily contribute to self-wellbeing, where self-wellbeing includes achievement of goals related to one's self, family, community, or other sympathetic affiliations. Crocker (2008) uses the same term but does not clarify who constitutes self/others or whose wellbeing is being achieved, directly or otherwise. Given these ambiguities, and to ease confusion, this thesis limits the notion of self to oneself and conceives *other-regarding goals* as goals primarily about persons *other* than oneself where such persons may include members of one's family, community or sympathetic affiliations. While parental goal achievement, as already noted, primarily achieves child (other-regarding) wellbeing and indirectly contributes to parents' self-wellbeing, the goals themselves are primarily about the child and are thus *other-regarding*.

Crocker also distinguishes between direct and indirect agency: in the former, an individual defines, plans and (/or is critical in) executes('ing) goals; in the latter, an individual plays a more minor role. Children's agency – as contributor or hinderance to parental goal achievement – presupposes direct or indirect parental agency as parents and children are co-agents in the actualization of some parental goals, particularly those relevant to schooling. In this thesis, the terms *parental agency* and *parental goals* underscore this co-agency; thus, *parental agency* is defined as *parents' actions to bring about parental goals*. Where children's agency is required to realize these goals, parental agency is co-agency and works in tandem with children's agency which, in this case, is also a co-agency. Others have also used *parental agency*, though somewhat differently, e.g., Vincent (2001) conceives it as parents' actions and responses in relation to their concerns about their children. Of evaluative interest in addition to agency freedom and achievement (including for whose wellbeing), therefore, are agents' goals or capabilities; and the values underpinning these (Alkire, 2008a). Accordingly, this thesis also defines *parental capabilities* – relevant to schooling – as parents' freedom to pursue or achieve valued beings and doings (i.e., *parental functionings*) on behalf of, and in relation to, their children. Parental capabilities and functionings, therefore, contribute to parent *and* child wellbeing (for parents, less directly) and require parent-child co-agency for the achievement of schooling-related goals.

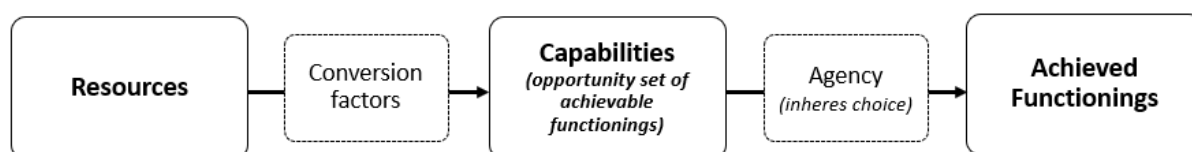
Robeyns (2017) also argues for the analytic primacy of capabilities, suggesting that analyses should *begin with ends*, i.e., capabilities (though where difficult to evaluate, e.g., toddlers or cognitively limited adults, *achieved* functionings) not means, i.e., resources and circumstances. For her, this is due to interpersonal variations in capability conversion, and the lack of real discernible means to achieve some ends (e.g., respect, friendships, etc.). For example, a private primary school is established in a community to provide a 'better quality' alternative to the existing public primary; however, the private's term fees are higher

than the public, nearly six times at upper levels. Thus, even though the perceived ‘better quality’ resource exists in the community, its poorest members do not have the freedom to pursue ‘better quality schooling’. Meanwhile, others who may manage to pay the fees continue to send their children to the public primary because they perceive no meaningful qualitative difference between the private and the public. A means-centric analysis would miss such interfamilial variations.

The ability to convert resources to capabilities is influenced by personal characteristics, environmental differences, social arrangements, relational differences (i.e., in the resource requirements of conventional behaviour) and intra-family distribution (e.g., of income) (Sen, 1999), factors later grouped as personal, environmental and social by Robeyns (2005, 2017). Notably, these factors are mutable by social policies and individual choices (Robeyns, 2017) and changes may occur over time. They are also linked. To illustrate, a poor primary school-aged child with a physical impairment (personal characteristics) has no capability to attend school (should her parents value this functioning) if the community public school refuses to accept her because it has neither resources nor relevant staff (social arrangements) and if no school for children with disabilities exists in proximity. A government policy laying out punitive measures for parents/guardians who fail to enrol such children in school while *at the same time* equipping public schools with relevant resources and staff may potentially alter the child’s capabilities. Notably, though Robeyns (2017) dissuades means-centric capability analyses, she acknowledges that capability analyses incorporate an account of means to enable insight into ways of expanding capability sets. In the highly disadvantaged settings of this study where everyday access to basic means/resources is not guaranteed, a meaningful consideration of means is necessary.

Figure 3.5 illustrates the concepts hitherto discussed. The box labelled ‘agency’ has been modified from the original illustration – which included ‘constrained choice’ – to underscore Sen’s definition of capability in which agency plays a central role.

Figure 3.5 The capability approach (simplified and adapted from Robeyns, 2017))



3.4.1. The individualism critique

Given study participants’ collective existence – collective intentionality (wants, intentions and beliefs) and group agency (action and responsibility) (Tuomela, 2013) – as will be discussed in **4.3.2** and **5.2**, it is

important to discuss the capability approach's individualism critique. Assessing capabilities and functionings requires evaluating individually valued beings and doings and the freedoms necessary to pursue them. Such *ethical individualism* – individuals as “units of ultimate moral concern” (i.e., as an end) – is both *desirable* and *unavoidable* (Robeyns, 2017, p. 58), given Sen's primary interest in how society “guarantee[s] the substantive freedoms of individuals” (Sen, 1999, p. 11). This core individualism has generated two relevant waves of critiques.

First, that the capability approach is excessively individualist at the expense of social structures (e.g., social, political, economic systems and institutions) (DeJaeghere, 2020; Deneulin & Stewart, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart, 2005). Though the influence of social structures is evident in conversion factors; Sen's dual view of freedom – 1) *opportunities* and 2) *processes*; and the notion of *effective* power where others' or institutions' actions bring about one's desired outcome (Sen, 1985), the structures underpinning these are not considered core to the approach (see Robeyns (2017)'s modular approach). Among others, scholars have argued that structures may hold intrinsic value and that greater attention to be paid to the conditions under which structures enable not just constrain capabilities (Deneulin & Stewart, 2002; Stewart, 2005).

In defense, Robeyns (2017) argues that ethical individualism is *not* ontological individualism, the latter presupposing that humans may exist and flourish independent of others (Sen, 2002). She notes that while ethical individualism is ultimately concerned with individual-level effects, it remains compatible with diverse ontological perspectives, including relativist ones. DeJaeghere (2020) is not satisfied, critiquing Robeyns (2017) for relegating structures to 'optional' status and ignoring their impact on all dimensions of capabilities⁴¹. She advocates a relational ontology which interrogates how structures shape capabilities and social relations [re]produce inequalities. Notably, others have argued that the capability approach is inherently relational, given the structural influences on capability conversion and Sen's own criticisms of the “excessively individualist and insufficiently social” trend in capability analyses (Smith & Seward, 2009). Sen has himself called for greater analytical “appreciation of the deep and pervasive influence of society [and relations] on individual ‘thinking, choosing and doing’” (Sen, 2002, p. 81), i.e., the social determinants of capabilities (see also Sen, 2004).

Second, and related to the first, that the capability approach excessively focuses on individual capabilities and agency, and not collective capabilities and agency (or action)⁴² where collective capabilities are usually

⁴¹ Robeyns (2017) places structure and agency in a non-optional module with *optional* content, i.e., both must be included though how is left to the user.

⁴² Critics mainly argue that individualism relegates social structures by (1) instrumentalizing them or insufficiently accounting for their influence on (2) individual capabilities and (3) individual agency (see Deneulin & Stewart (2002)). The three are interrelated and I have combined #2 and #3.

defined as capabilities attainable by individuals *only* through their engagement in collective action or membership in a social network (i.e., and not by their individual efforts) (Ibrahim, 2006).

Robeyns (2017) concedes that collective capability may apply when collective action is required to guarantee otherwise unrealizable individual capabilities e.g., collective action towards poverty alleviation goals. However, like Sen (2002), she insists on the principle of the individual as an ‘end’ even as this appears to contest the capability approach’s value pluralism – the existence of other moral principles and goals, or ultimate values, key to assessing social conditions. Her insistence also discounts the intrinsic value of structures where ethical individualism is *instrumental* i.e., a *means* towards ethical collectivism that superordinates groups above individuals as units of moral concern. The primarily collective intentionality and group agentic existence in this study’s rural *Yorùbá* communities challenge ethical individualism. Though liberalism is increasingly being adopted as communities transition over time, individuals and the collective remain units of moral concern and, where both contend, collective moral interest (for now) takes precedence.

Robeyns’ definition of collective capabilities also fails to acknowledge freedoms or capabilities applying only to collectives. Here, she departs from Sen (2002, p. 85) who himself acknowledged the existence of “genuinely collective capabilities” exercised by groups, e.g., genocides, nuclear warfare, etc. Importantly, the capability approach’s value plurality suggests that ethical multiplicities (e.g., individualism, collectivism, etc.) can be accommodated. In this thesis, I distinguish *communal* capabilities and *communal* agency from ‘collective capabilities’ or agency, typically employed in literature to refer to collective action against specific poverty reduction goals or forms of oppression (e.g., Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart, 2005). Here, *communal* capabilities and agency underscore the lived experiences of people, like the rural *Yorùbás*, for whom a collective existence is *intrinsic* and manifested in everyday living and, thus, is not limited to specific poverty-reduction or anti-oppression goals or actions. Notably, both *collective* and *communal* capabilities inhere a relational ontology. This strongly aligns with the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives adopted for this study, as will be discussed in **Chapter 4**.

3.4.2. The capability approach and education

For Sen, education is both constitutive and instrumental. On the one hand, lack of basic education deprives basic intrinsic freedoms like freedom from hunger, premature mortality, illiteracy, innumeracy, political participation and freedom of speech (Sen, 1999). On the other hand, social opportunities including education, are one of the five instrumental freedoms (footnote 36) which enable a person to “live better” (p. 39). Education also enables other instrumental freedoms, particularly economic growth, other social opportunities (e.g., health) and political participation. The capability approach retains broad appeal in

education because it transcends human capital and rights-based perspectives which focus, respectively, on employment, economic growth, education inputs and achievement; and government's guarantee of basic educational rights (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). In contexts of significant deprivation and limited inputs, these evaluative focuses offer narrow insights. Alternatively, the approach offers greater breadth by seeking to understand and by valuing education for what it enables people to be or do (capabilities), where such beings or doings (functionings) are those that diverse educational stakeholders (e.g., learners, parents, teachers, communities, governments, etc.) value (Walker, 2006; Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Sen's ideas around education are not without critique. One, his notion of education appears to comprise literacy, numeracy, and other elements of formal, written forms of schooling which little acknowledge other ways in which learning occurs. Two, his perceived conception of education as a positive, "unqualified good" (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 8), is seen to overlook schooling heterogeneity, where differences in form and outcomes engender negative experiences and capability constraints for some groups (Unterhalter, 2003). For example, schooling may be of extremely poor quality – with persistent, long-lasting effects – and schools may reinforce harmful societal practices or norms (e.g., corporal punishment). While education that perpetuates unfreedoms is clearly antithetical to the capability approach, scholars agree that analyses should move beyond opportunity freedoms and agency to interrogate how educational settings [re]produce inequalities and social injustices through historical, normative and power contestations (Unterhalter & Walker, 2007). Educational capabilities and/or achieved functionings are neither apolitical nor acontextual as education is a socially constructed process as well as a physical and social space (Unterhalter, 2003). Thus, their analysis should be accompanied by a social theory which helps interrogate the data generated.

Studies applying the capability approach in educational research are increasingly heeding this call. An example is Hart (2018) who supplements the capability approach with Bourdieu's concepts to explore the social embeddedness of educational capabilities and aspirations among British youth. Similarly, Ashraf (2019) combines Sen with Bourdieu to explore lower middle-class families' capabilities, educational capital and habitus in Islamabad, Pakistan. Amongst studies in sub-Saharan Africa, there has been implicit and explicit addition of social theoretical tools. Though with no explicitly stated social theory, Unterhalter (2012)'s exploration of children's capabilities in Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa highlights structural and relational constraints underpinning children's adaptive preferences. Previously cited DeJaeghere (2020) advocates a relational capabilitarianism grounded in postcolonial and feminist analyses of social relations and power while in an earlier work (2018) combines capabilitarian concepts with Bourdieuan notions of habitus and fields to explore structural influences on young rural Tanzanian women's aspirations and agency. As already noted, few studies have explored rural parents' perspectives and practices, and fewer still have employed the capability approach. An exception is Mukwambo (2019)'s

earlier referenced study which offers a partial view of rural parents' perspectives of secondary learners' schooling. However, though the study alludes to the intersectionality of social and other influences, it offers no social theoretical framework. Unlike this study, it stops short of exploring parents' engagement and its linkage with those perspectives. In this study, to provide the necessary socio-theoretical lens to interrogate the social influences on parental capabilities and functionings, Bourdieu's social theory concepts are applied. These are discussed next.

3.5. Bourdieu's toolkit

To adequately answer its research questions, this thesis draws from Bourdieu's socio-theoretical toolbox to complement the capability approach with concepts relevant to structures and resources. These are field, habitus, capital, and cultural and social reproduction. They are discussed in turn.

3.5.1. Field

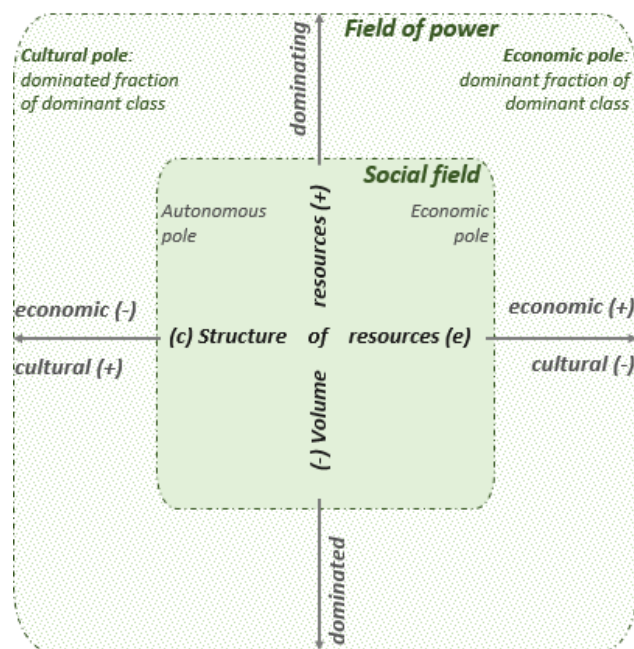
A field is an autonomous domain of social activity corresponding to certain rules of functioning and encompassing specific institutions which define relationships among, and the positions of, the agents (i.e., individuals) within and outside it (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). Large fields are divisible into subfields which, though following the broader rules of the field, have their own rules and institutions (Thompson, 2014). For instance, 'education' is a 'large' field which may be divided into early childhood, basic, secondary, tertiary, etc. though field/subfield boundaries are not always clearly delineated (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). In the basic schooling subfield, with which this study is concerned, educators maintain relations with external stakeholders such as parents, government officials, etc. In the Bourdieuan social field, agents who know and interpret practices and represent particular activities become 'elites' (i.e., dominant agents) who systematically transform implicit practices into explicit norms. Their attributes become part of their capital, their resources or "accumulated labour in materialized...or... embodied form" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). This capital is the "currency" of the field: it determines the field's operations; who/what is included or excluded; and what is valued and how (Grenfell, 2009). Agents, therefore, struggle to define and interpret rules of practice: whosoever exerts the most control or power is recognized as having the most capital⁴³, implying that capital is unevenly and hierarchically distributed within fields.

The degree of autonomy of each social field is relative to the field of power, a more abstract field representing the relations between dominant agents from various fields (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). Within

⁴³ This implies a power play. Bourdieu sometimes synonymizes capital with power because they "amount to the same thing" (1986, p. 241).

this field of power, an economic pole (dominant fraction of the dominant group) competes with a cultural pole (dominated fraction of the dominant group). Given each social field exists within the field of power, the former's internal dynamics are 'more or less directly affected' (p. 10) by the latter such that the social field also comprises competing poles: an autonomous one – for culturally dominant agents – and a heteronomous one – for economically and politically dominant agents. Each field, including the field of power, akin to a cartesian plane, is thereby structured by the volume of resources (dominating/dominated) (vertical axis); structure of resources (autonomous/heteronomous; or cultural/economic in the field of power) (horizontal axis); internal hierarchies; and history (of internal struggles), among other demarcations. Accordingly, social class within the social field is understood, partly, as the objective positions/locations of groups of agents with similar volumes and structures of resources (or capital) (Crossley, 2014). The below illustrates the social field and field of power:

Figure 3.6 Specific social fields and the field of power, adapted from Hilgers & Mangez (2015)



The exercise of power is not physical but mostly symbolic through invisible everyday acts that subordinated agents misrecognize as power but recognize as the way things are (i.e., the symbolic order), legitimizing symbolic power while undergoing symbolic violence as a result (Bourdieu, 1991). This misrecognition underscores the complicity of the dominated in the symbolic exchange, the efficacy of which is determined by the extent of such misrecognition. Though individuals within social classes are not homogenous (Vincent, 2001), they are linked by the volume and structure of their capital. Perhaps most importantly for Bourdieu, they are linked by their collective *habitus* or dispositions (Crossley, 2014). This concept is discussed next.

3.5.2. Habitus

Automized activities within fields are generated by an agent's *habitus*, a set of "internalized, 'embodied' social structures...the product of the incorporation of the fundamental structures of a society" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 468). It is a "system[s] of durable, transposable dispositions, ... principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). Habitus interacts with agents' capital within the field to shape the products or "thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions" (p. 55) of the practical world of "already realized ends" or largely predetermined procedures and paths (p. 53). Practices, then, in this practical world may be thought of as the actions that correspond to these predetermined procedures and paths, "embodying shared rules and processes" (Smith, 2020) including the "routinized way[s] in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). In this thesis, 'practices' are used in two ways: 1) in the Bourdieuan sense of relational, habitus-generated products; and 2) (as will be shown later), for the school involvement actions typologized by Barger et al. (2019) and previously discussed in **3.2**.

Habitus is "a product of history" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). Through its embodiment, it imbibes a history (of previous social conditions and structures), generating historicized practices even after the circumstances under which it was formed have disappeared (Nash, 1990, 1999). Thus, habitus perpetuates the inter-generational transmission of social structures that enable cultures to be reproduced over time. Moreover, given habitus is "inculcated by objective structural conditions" (Nash, 1999, p. 184) and, as noted earlier, fields encompass specific institutions, Bourdieu was cognizant of the existence of objective structures which operate independently of agents to facilitate or constrain their practices (Mills, 2008). As such, his conceptualization of social structures – often critiqued as weak – appears to be a combination of both embodied and more explicit objective (institutionalized) structures (Nash, 1990), the latter manifested in formal national and transnational (governmental and non-governmental) institutions (Powers & Faden, 2019), including legal, economic, and social systems or arrangements (see also Sen's instrumental freedoms, footnote **36**).

However, embodied structures, or habitus, were of greater concern to Bourdieu because he sought to mediate between objective structure and agency, that is, to explain how objective structures become the practices that generate dispositions or actions among the groups accompanying those structures (Nash, 1990). Nash (1999) argues that because *habitus* is the "physical embodiment of objective structure" (p. 184), it shapes regulated, pre-determined dispositions. Moreover, he argues, while habitus is cognizant of the "strategic behaviour of groups," it "allows no recognition of self, or choice or action" (1990, p. 434) and individual deviations from the internalized principles of group habitus are considered "a matter of chance" (1999, p. 178). For Reay (2004), though "a collective understanding of habitus is necessary," habitus is

multi-layered and constitutes one on hand, “general notions” at the societal level and “more complex differentiated notions” at the individual level (p. 434). Mills (2008) agrees with a less rigid and deterministic habitus, arguing that while habitus shapes choices, it does not determine them. She acknowledges Bourdieu’s limited conceptualization of agency but notes that this limitedness does not altogether preclude the notion. Like Grenfell (2009), she argues that Bourdieu’s much criticized pessimism arises not from his disbelief in individual capabilities, but in his belief in the durability of social structures which constrain all individual action. She argues for a consideration of the reproductive and transformative potentials of habitus, the former an exploration of agents’ fatalistic perceptions of constraints which result in their surrender to the symbolic order (agency constraining) and the latter, an examination of agents’ recognition and actualization of “opportunities for improvisation” (Mills, 2008, p. 83) (agency expanding). While this study aligns with views of a more flexible habitus, it acknowledges the conceptual limitations of agency within Bourdieu’s constructs which, as already noted, provided the rationale for the integration of the capability approach within the conceptual framework.

As the above implies, scholars conceive and operationalize habitus in different ways. For Sullivan (2002), habitus is simply a set of attitudes and values. However, she critiques its ambiguity and inoperability, arguing that the concept is widely used but with little clarity. Costa et al. (2019) agree that its application is not straightforward due, among others, to the difficulty of defining dispositions, deciding the methods to explore them, and deciding which among the dispositions discovered are relevant to one’s study. For them, applications of habitus will differ, given differences in research purposes, questions and the phenomena under study. However, they argue that habitus is uncovered through repetition of perspectives and practices, and the interweaving of participant subjectivity – introspections on their own dispositions – and, as advocated by Bourdieu, researcher reflexivity – (critical) distancing from and post hoc application of theoretical tools to data. Reflexivity, in this vein, seeks to access the meanings participants attribute to their own social realities (Atkinson, 1998, cited in Costa et al., 2019).

Notably, and perhaps due to such difficulties, some scholars encourage divergence from Bourdieu if the data necessitates it (Atkinson, 2011, cited in Stahl, 2016). While habitus retains relevance in this thesis to broadly frame socio-cultural norms or ‘codes and principles of living’ (3.5.1), a more tailored concept – parental ethnotheories – is offered by the anthropological cultural psychology literature. Specific to parents (or carers), the concept is understood as the cultural belief systems underpinning parents’ organization of children’s everyday lives (Harkness & Super, 1996)⁴⁴. It is positioned in this thesis as a conceptual subset of parental habitus (i.e., habitus on behalf of, and in relation to, children), and will be

⁴⁴ These constitute one component of the developmental niche, the others being 1) children’s physical and social settings; and 2) the culturally regulated customs of childcare and bearing. Parental habitus encompasses *all* dispositions related to parenting and is not specific to childhood beliefs and practices.

applied to examine parents' child rearing beliefs and practices towards responding to the second research question.

Among the contexts of application of ethnotheories are indigenous and rural African societies, including the *Yorùbá*. For instance, Levine et al. (2003)'s late 1960s study of rural and urban *Yorùbá* fathers found that the former more greatly valued children's practical (or 'instrumental') skills acquired through the completion of household errands and tasks. Zeitlin (1996)'s late 1980s study of *Yorùbá* parents also found that parents accorded a central role to children's errand-completion capabilities which, for them, also inculcated the necessary social skills required for verbal and commercial transactions. Other studies have shown similar findings where *Yorùbá* parents assigned children household duties and sent them on errands, as well as trained them to be responsible, helpful and to respectfully relate with others, particularly those of age seniority (Ogunnaike & Houser, 2002; Omobowale et al., 2019). For parents, these practices contributed to the development of an *Ọmọlúàbí*, – a person of good character – a central concept in *Yorùbá* beliefs around child rearing and social cohesion (Busari et al., 2017) and one of the goals of *Yorùbá* traditional education (Akinyemi 2003) (see Oyinloye (forthcoming) for further discussion of *Yorùbá* ethnotheories). As will be discussed in **7.3**, these ethnotheories are shared by this study's *Yorùbá* parents, thereby providing evidence of embodied social structures: a historical and socio-culturally situated set of shared ideas which represent "often implicit, taken-for-granted ideas about the 'right' way to think or act" (Harkness & Super, 2006, p. 62).

3.5.3. Capital

The rules of practice within social fields, including the language, categories, codes and principles of living comprise Bourdieu's notion of culture (i.e., of the field) (Nash, 1990). However, the capital of culture, or cultural capital, is more than these "embodied dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17). Cultural capital can also be *objectified* – in tangible forms like books, machines, paintings, artefacts, etc. – or *institutionalized* – in legal, education credentials. Institutionalized cultural capital, a subset of *objectified*, bestows autonomy upon its holder unlike objectified. Bourdieu identifies two other main forms of capital: economic and social. Economic capital is easily and immediately convertible into money (and may be institutionalized as property rights) while social capital is a network of relationships or connections (e.g., family, groups, associations, etc.) whose collectively owned capital is accessible by individual members who maintain relationships through material or symbolic exchanges over time. Social capital is an important means through which agents and institutions jostle for valued positions in the field (Grenfell, 2009). Bourdieu (1986) also identifies symbolic capital, sometimes called a 'fourth' capital. It is a capital of representation, recognition and misrecognition because it is unrecognized as capital but recognized as legitimate. Examples include titles (i.e., of nobility) or statuses (i.e., of marriage, of being in a family, etc.).

Symbolic capital is primarily employed in this thesis through the notion of symbolic power/violence discussed in **3.5.1** though, as Grenfell (2009) notes, all capitals function symbolically.

Bourdieu's three main forms of capitals are linked in various ways. Economic capital underpins and can be transformed into social and cultural capital. The three are transformable into one another e.g., social networks may enable a child's admission into an elite school from which she obtains prestigious education credentials and reinforces her networks. These qualifications, along with the child's deepened networks, enable employment in a prestigious, high-paying job which guarantees economic capital which can again be transformed into other forms. The capitals are also interconnected in their usage. For instance, embodied capital, e.g., knowledge, language, etc. helps 'consume' art, while educational knowledge helps function in employment. Notably, capitals are differentiated by their transmissibility. Where economic and objectified cultural capitals are "transmissible in their materiality" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 19), the transmission of social and embodied cultural capitals are largely hidden. Similarly, objective cultural capital is implicitly transmitted by the educational effects of its mere existence (i.e., the presence of books, technology, or other artefacts in the home) or its consumption (e.g., reading a book or using an iPad). Thus networks, particularly families, expend greater effort in more implicit and covert forms of transmission. Transmissibility will be further explored in **3.5.4**.

Like habitus, the concepts of capital are widely but variedly used, resulting in criticisms of their vagueness. In particular is parental cultural capital whose impreciseness, for Sullivan (2002), has generated multiple operationalizations, much of which coalesces around parental participation in 'beaux arts' (art classes, symphonic concerts, the Opera, ballet, museums, galleries, theatre, etc.; watching or listening to high culture TV/radio programs; etc.) and reading/associated behaviours (e.g., library visits, books owned, and reading to children, the latter presupposing the existence of books or similar material resources at home). Lareau and Weininger (2003) critique the trend of investigating causality between beaux arts (which they note is specific to French culture) and children's skill or achievement, arguing for a broadened view which explores the interplay between institutionalized forms of assessment; and skills and knowledge. For them, research on cultural capital in education (or educational cultural capital) should examine 1) schools' formal and informal expectations (which function evaluatively); and 2) learners' and parents' knowledge, skills and capacity to meet these. Their approach underscores the need to explore multiple perspectives and "examin[e] cultural factors in detail" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 164). The approach is also more appropriate for this study as parents do not engage in 'beaux arts'; are mostly unschooled; and primarily engage in farming and micro-scale income-generating activities. Accordingly, this thesis conceptualizes parental cultural capital as parents' linguistic, cultural and other competence in affairs related to their children. As shown next, this definition draws from Bourdieu's. Parental 'educational cultural capital', defined in **3.2.1** and discussed here, narrows these affairs to schooling.

3.5.4. Bourdieu and education: Cultural and social reproduction

Bourdieu is not merely concerned with the potential of capital to produce “profits” (i.e., tangible or other gains), he is primarily concerned with its potential to “reproduce itself” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). This means “the tendency of [social] structures to reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with the system of predispositions ... capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of the structures” (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 487). For Bourdieu, the education system is the greatest contributor to the reproduction (or transmission) of cultural capital between social classes, a fact it hides with its pretense of neutrality. This contribution manifests in the pedagogical transmission of the dominant culture whose comprehension and inculcation is contingent upon learners’ prior embodied cultural capital:

The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes...in that the culture it transmits is closer to the dominant culture.... Inasmuch as it operates in and through a relationship of communication, pedagogic action directed at inculcating the dominant culture...depends upon the previous possession of the instruments of appropriation⁴⁵.... Which, in a society divided into classes, are very unequally distributed among children from different social classes (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 493-494).

This dominant culture stems from “the educational norms of those social classes capable of imposing the...criteria of evaluat[ion] ... most favourable to their products” (i.e., offsprings) (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 495). These norms “consist mainly of linguistic and cultural competence⁴⁶ and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture” (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 494). Families, thus, are an important medium for the transmission of cultural capital. For instance, middle- and upper-class families actively transmit the dominant, recognized cultural capital unto their children who arrive at school already ahead of lower-class peers (see Lareau (2011)’s *concerted cultivation*). As seen in **3.3.3**, similar transmission practices occur amongst the Nigerian middle class. As a result, higher class children succeed in the schooling system and most lower-class children do not – the few who succeed do because they imbibe the dominant educational norms, not because they challenge them. Thus, cultural and social reproduction are synchronous and indissoluble, reinforcing their interconnectedness. This indissolubility is evident in the institutionalized cultural capital (academic credentials) and status (social and symbolic capitals) conferred simultaneously upon the ‘educated’ (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The interconnectedness offers explanatory power for education’s capacity to

⁴⁵ The educational system only transmits the dominant culture, not the tool to consume or understand it.

⁴⁶ Some scholars suggest Bourdieu also expresses this as *cognitive structures and behaviour dispositions* (Nash, 1990).

“reinforce and consecrates initial inequalities,” and partly explains why Bourdieu’s ideas around social and cultural reproduction retain broad appeal in education research (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 493).

In highlighting linguistic and cultural competences, Bourdieu draws attention to non-material resources. This is notable, given the persistence of achievement differences (‘the achievement gap’) between social classes despite the universalization of education till secondary (Sullivan, 2002), a persistence which suggests capital transmission among the higher classes involves more than just material resources⁴⁷. A focus on non-material resources is relevant in more industrialized contexts where universalization applies beyond basic education and where it indeed means free schooling. In this study’s communities where universalization excludes secondary and incurs significant hidden fees, it will be necessary to also attend to the material resources (e.g., economic capital and objectified cultural capital) which facilitate capital transmission through education. Having thus discussed the main theoretical concepts of this study, the next section justifies their combination.

3.6. A Sen-Bourdieu framework for parental involvement

Underpinning the capability approach and Bourdieu’s concepts are similar theoretical motivations. As previously shown, the capability approach arose out of Sen’s concerns with utilitarianism and the lack of interpersonal comparability of dominant human capital approaches. Bourdieu shares a similar disdain for a narrow, utilitarian, human capital view of actions or practices (Grenfell, 2009). For Bourdieu, social action may be underpinned by values and interests which transcend economic rationale:

Orthodox economies overlook the fact that practices may have principles other than mechanical causes or the conscious intention to maximise one’s utility.... Practises [sic] form an economy, that is, [they] follow an immanent reason that cannot be restricted to economic reason, for the economy of practices may be defined by reference to a wide range of functions and ends” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 119, as cited in Grenfell, 2013).

However, it is in the conceptualization of who determines what is valued where both theorists diverge. While for Bourdieu, this must be understood through social values (i.e., habitus), for Sen, it is through individual capabilities. These differences underscore the strengths of both frameworks. As already noted, Bourdieu’s concepts offer explanatory capacity for material and non-material resources, on one hand, and social structures on the other, while the capability approach provides an evaluative lens towards valued beings and doings, and individual (and, as has been argued, communal) choice and agency in the pursuit

⁴⁷ Of course, higher classes who privately educate their children continue to transmit significant material resources.

of such functionings. However, these differences also expose their gaps. Bourdieu's emphasis on the resilience of social structures vis-à-vis individual agency leaves little room for interpersonal comparisons – the way capabilities have been shown to do – while the capability approach's ethical individualism subordinates means and structures. These respective gaps justify the combination of and complementarity between Sen's capability approach and Bourdieu's social concepts. Moreover, the capability approach is a deliberately 'underspecified framework' and 'additional specifications' are necessary, depending on the particular analytical objective, before the approach becomes useful for the purpose intended (Robeyns, 2017, p. 29). As Sen himself acknowledges, capabilities as characteristics of individual (or communal) advantages, are not sufficient to tell us about the fairness or equity of the processes involved in realizing those capabilities (Sen, 2005). These additional considerations – related to processes – must be explained using other ideas or concepts (Sen, 2005).

Bourdieu's social theory is ontologically (and therefore epistemologically) relational. He gives primacy to the unseen relations between elements of the social world (Bourdieu, 1998). For him, the "real is the relational" (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989, p. 39) and the "social world is a relational space" (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015, p. 5). This relationality is intrinsic to his theorization and manifested in the interrelationships between various concepts (e.g., fields and capitals; interconnectedness of the forms of capital; practice as an outcome of the relationship between field, capital and habitus; etc.) (Gale & Lingard, 2015). In contrast, though the capability approach's core concepts – *capabilities* and *functionings* – make minimal metaphysical claims (functionings as constitutive of human being) (Robeyns, 2017), the approach does not explicitly specify their ontological nature (Martins, 2006). However, capabilities as characteristics of individual or group advantage exist within social relations and institutions (see Sen, 2004). For Martins (2006, p. 676), the implicit ontological assumptions within Sen's conception of capabilities and functionings are that structures (in this case social) "are the underlying conditions of possibility that enable or facilitate the occurrence of a given phenomenon." These structures include powers (i.e., capabilities) which operate through certain mechanisms and which may or may not be exercised towards events and situations. Therefore, social structures, which enable or constrain "human agency and social practices", entail social rules attached to internally related social positions; in other words, position holders and their actions are determined by their relations (Martins, 2006, p. 677; Owens et al., 2021; Smith & Seward, 2009). As discussed in **3.4.1**, such social (structural) factors are in fact explicit within Sen's dual view of freedom which underscores not just the existence of opportunities, but also the processes which interact with those opportunities to either enable or constrain their existence or realization. As such, capabilities are inherently ontologically relational and can be evaluated through a relational ontological perspective, like that adopted in this study, which explores not just the existence of capabilities in these social spaces but also how power manifests in these spaces (DeJaeghere, 2020).

Notably, because the capability approach is deliberately under specified and thus “concerned with laying the conceptual ground for science rather than providing a theory for understanding or analyzing society” (Powell & McGrath, 2019 p. 45), it can enter into “marriage” (p. 45) with more substantive theories with which it shares similar implicit assumptions. This study’s coupling of Bourdieu’s relational concepts with the inherently relational capability approach operationalizes the approach in the way intended. That is, as a perspective to be supplemented with other theoretical tools employed to not only generate capabilities and functionings, but also to elucidate the social context which potentiates such capabilities, and within which functionings are realized. This relational view is in keeping with the study’s relativist ontological and subjectivist epistemological philosophical assumptions, as will be further discussed in **Chapter 4**.

Despite the relational ontological positioning of the capability approach and Bourdieu’s concepts, it could be argued that the theoretical assumptions of Sen and Bourdieu, particularly in relation to public / state schooling outcomes, are contentious (e.g., Unterhalter et al., 2014). For instance, those who perceive in Sen a liberalism (e.g., Dean, 2009) which views schooling as constitutive and instrumental (and therefore, capability enhancing (see 3.4.2)), may argue that this contends with Bourdieu’s neo-Marxist construction of schooling as a reproducer of cultural and social class positions (i.e., capability maintaining, and by extension, depriving) (see 3.5.4). While a liberalist perception of Sen and a Marxist interpretation of Bourdieu, to some extent, validates these tensions, an alternative, more nuanced reading of both theorists suggest that it is viable to combine their ideas for two reasons hereafter discussed.

One, both Sen and Bourdieu are influenced by the perspectives of a wide range of scholars and systems. Sen draws on and seeks to redefine certain liberal (particularly Rawlsian) notions of freedom, but his perspectives on justice – in which capabilities/freedoms are of particular importance – draws not only on Hobbesian (and later Kantian and Rawlsian, among others) ideas around transcendental institutionalism (or how to create a perfectly just institutions); but also on diverse ideas (e.g., Adam Smith, Marx, John Stuart Mill, among others) around how to socially realize a just society through institutions, behaviours, and other influences (Sen, 2009). In *The Idea of Justice*, Sen declares his foremost interest in the latter – justice-focused social realizations – and admits to a “shared point of departure” with thinkers such as Wollstonecraft, Marx, Mill, etc., who share his interest in the actual realizations of society, rather than just its institutions and rules (Sen, 2009, p. 9). Specifically, though Sen has been critiqued for not sufficiently engaging with capitalism (e.g., Dean, 2009), there are synergies between his and Marxist anti-capitalist notions of work as human interaction with nature in the way the person has reason to value (and thereby freely chooses to pursue), rather than as a contractual arrangement which potentially limits such freedom. Evident in *The Idea of Justice* is also a strong influence of Hindu philosophy, particularly Hindu conceptions of justice, and evident in this and other works (e.g., Sen, 1985) are influences of Grecian, particularly Aristotelian, ideas around well-being and the conception of the good. Notably, in his Nobel lecture (Sen,

1998) as well as *The Idea of Justice*, he draws from social choice theory as an alternative to Rawlsian and similar theories of justice which underpin what he calls mainstream (i.e., liberal) economics – philosophically influenced by rational choice theory or the singular pursuit of one’s own interests and goals (Sen, 2009) – to evaluate the choice between different alternatives, made by individuals through a social, rather than self-interested, perspective.

Bourdieu, though influenced by Marxist ideas of the role of economic capital in social reproduction (i.e., dominant social classes maintain their domination in the schooling field by limiting the opportunities of dominated lower classes to access ‘high quality’ schooling) (Webb et al., 2002) subordinates, to some degree, the role of economic capital in social reproduction through schooling. For him schooling contributes to cultural and therefore social reproduction through higher class families’ transmission of cultural capital and, crucially, the habitus this embodies, and schools’ recognition of such capital in students from such families, as discussed in **3.5.4** (Bourdieu, 1998). Moreover, Bourdieu critiques Marxist theory of the real ontological existence of social classes, a realness sometimes instantiated by political mobilization. The social world, for Bourdieu, is a relational ontological space of continuous struggle between social agents who occupy certain positions (i.e., are endowed with different volume and structure of capital) (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu’s critique led Wacquant (1989, p. 32) to construe, in Bourdieu, a “desire to undercut the claims of structural Marxism”. The plethora of thinkers, against and with which Bourdieu sought to position himself, suggest a wide and varied range of intellectual influences on his ideas.

Bourdieu and Sen’s shared concerns about social realizations implies that both theorists are not on opposing ends of the theoretical spectrum. Both are concerned with how to realize social justice but while Bourdieu primarily focuses on the behaviours and actions of (social) institutions (at the expense, to some extent, of people), Sen primarily focuses on the behaviours and actions of people (at the expense, to some extent, of institutions). Sen’s ‘conceptual neglect’ of institutions could be interpreted as a conceptual neglect of power, that is, how power is enacted through, by and within institutions to constrain or enable the realization of justice. In this vein, critiques of Sen’s neglect of power (e.g., Dean, 2009; Dejaeghere, 2020) or, as discussed in **3.4.2**, the neglect of the social and institutional influences context of schooling, are not without merit. However, as already alluded, such critiques misconstrue Sen’s intentions. Sen’s theoretical objective was to lay the conceptual ground or to “philosophically under-labour socio-economic categories and concepts” (Martins, 2006, p. 671), rather than seek to provide a scientific explanation of the mechanisms of the social realm, including the workings of power. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the need to consider the processes, i.e., the social context, of the behaviours and actions around schooling justifies this study’s inclusion of a social theory, namely the concepts of Bourdieu.

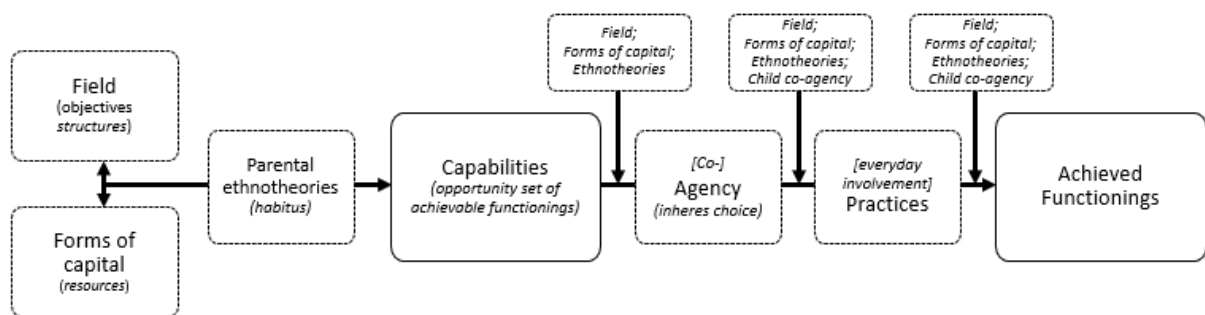
Two, Sen and Bourdieu's perceived differential predictions about schooling outcomes – typically capability enhancing (Sen) and strongly class reproducing (e.g., capability depriving for lower-class children) (Bourdieu) – does suggest a possible tension. However, it is useful to note that for Bourdieu, schooling *contributes* to [Bourdieu's emphasis], rather than determines, cultural and therefore social reproduction. Implicit in this emphasis is that there are other factors at work such that schooling does not always (even if in some contexts, it largely does) reproduce cultural and social class, as Bourdieu's own personal life attests. The real question then is, under what conditions, for whom, when and how does schooling enhance or deprive capabilities? Such a question is difficult to explore using *only* a Bourdieuan analysis of social class. As often pointed out, Bourdieu's analysis, and therefore views, of schooling is primarily of the "closed, elitist and intensely competitive" French state schooling system (Webb et al., 2002, p. 105), and while it may resonate with other "modern western societies", it may not always be directly transferrable to other contexts. Bourdieu himself alludes to this when he suggests a generative reading of his work, i.e., the application of his concepts in the "particular case of the possible" to construct the social and symbolic spaces, and the principles of differentiation (i.e., among the social classes) in the specific context of application (Bourdieu, 1998 p. 13).

While, as discussed in **3.4.2**, Sen's perceived qualification of basic education (especially literacy) as a positive good) suggests a disinterest in schooling effectiveness, Sen's analysis of the lower quality and availability of social arrangements such as health care, education, law and order, e.g., for African Americans, demonstrates otherwise (Sen, 1999). In *The Idea of Justice*, he notes that "the nature of schooling and education", among other social arrangements, is critical in realizing freedom from premature mortality (Sen, 2009). The perception that Sen uncritically views schooling, particularly that provided by the state, as unequivocally enhancing capabilities appears to underrecognize Sen's cognizance of the capability depriving possibilities of certain forms of schooling for certain groups of people in certain places. Notably, the ontological assumption of openness in the capability approach – where capabilities are potentials which may or may not be exercised and, even when exercised, may or may not be actualized in a constant and predictable way (Martins, 2006) – underscores the heterogeneity of outcomes, even within social arrangements such as schooling. For example, despite the many current challenges of public schooling in Africa (including Nigeria), the public schooling apparatus has also enhanced the capabilities of millions of children (Oketch, 2021). The outcomes of schooling are therefore diverse, reflecting the continent's complexity. Thus, rather than a binary framing of [state] schooling as capability depriving or capability enhancing, attention should be directed to the conditions under which, for whom, when and how schooling enhances or deprives capabilities. In particularly complex contexts, such as those of the broader context of this study, such an undertaking benefits from the application of diverse explanatory frameworks which deepen insight into structural conditions as well as people's perspectives and actions in

relation to schooling. In this study, that expanded insight is enabled by the complementary conceptual ideas of Sen and Bourdieu.

As noted in **3.4.2**, others have also combined Sen and Bourdieu. Of particular relevance to this study is Hart (2018)'s Sen-Bourdieu analytical framework which employs *family capital* to capture the range of resources convertible to capabilities; and *field and habitus* for the structural influences on capital and capability conversion. Here, family capital is first converted to individual capital which is then converted to individual capabilities. While this study aligns with Hart's use of capital to conceptualize resources and the influence of field and ethnotheories, it departs from the notion of individual capital which appears an oxymoron in Bourdieu's socially durable toolkit (it may be less contradictory to move from family capital to family capabilities and then to individual capabilities). As shown in **Figure 3.5**, the space between the capability set and achieved functionings (i.e., the capability space) comprises choice and agency and, given the focus of this study, this refers to agency around parents' involvement in schooling (categorized by the parental involvement typology discussed in **3.2**). The below diagram illustrates the study's overall conceptual framework which draws from Hart in extending **Figure 3.5**:

Figure 3.7 A Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework for parental involvement



As shown, resources and conversion factors from **Figure 3.5** have been replaced with field and forms of capital, and ethnotheories respectively (i.e., the social space), as determinants of the ethnotheories which underpin parents' functionings regarding children. Habitus and ethnotheories represent the embodied objective structures which, alongside more explicit objective structures, comprise the overarching structures of the social space. Notably, the conceptual separation of practices and achieved functionings serves to underscore their potential difference. For instance, a parent who values their child being educated and acts to send the child to school every day may not realize the functioning due, among others, to the quality of education on offer and the child's own agency (i.e., decision to attend school). Such influences are illustrated in the diagram by the inclusion of the social space and child's co-agency in the intervals of the capability space. Thus, the capability space is not only preceded by but also indissoluble from the social space, given the latter permeates and underpins the former.

As already discussed, the capability approach has been varyingly applied to research on education in sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, notions of capital have been used, though more limitedly, to explore parental involvement. For example, Donkor (2013) suggests some peri-urban Ghanaian parents' commitment to socio-cultural norms resulted in persistent expenditures on social and cultural activities at the expense of children's schooling. In their study of South African SGBs, Brown & Duku (2008) found school governance activities reinforced African norms which contended SGBs' modernist policies. To my knowledge, this study is the first to conceptually combine the capability approach and Bourdieu's concepts to examine what rural African parents value and how they involve themselves in their children's schooling. In doing so, the study makes an important theoretical and analytical contribution to the growing literature on parental involvement in Africa. Methodologically, the study's qualitative framework, as will be discussed in the next chapter, juxtaposes the dominant quantitative methodology in the extant parental involvement literature to provide rich, in-depth and unique insights. Moreover, the study's rural African context pluralizes the predominantly highly industrialized contexts of the literature and, as the findings will demonstrate, expands dominant categorizations of involvement. The ideas discussed in this chapter have contributed to the development of this study's research questions. I re-introduce these next.

3.7. Introducing the research questions

To contribute to the evidence base around parents' schooling perspectives and involvement in rural sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on Nigeria, this study applies its Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework to generate answers to the following research questions:

- 1) How do teachers in rural, public primary schools in *Kwara* state perceive the parents of the children who attend their schools?
- 2) What are the perspectives, on schooling, of parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in *Kwara* state?
- 3) In what ways are parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in *Kwara* state involved with their children's schooling?

Although this study's main focus is parents, the first question is important because, as Lareau & Weininger (2003) suggest, examining schools' expectations (inherent in their perceptions) is critical to understanding educational cultural capital, particularly whether parents and learners possess the capability to meet these expectations. Moreover, as noted in **1.3**, the parent-focused questions not only centre parents' voices but enable them to, as it were, 'respond' to and possibly challenge teachers' characterizations of them. However, parents and schools' perspectives may not always be in contention; thus, juxtaposing teachers and parents' perspectives facilitates an exploration of heterogeneous and homogenous perspectives,

representing a uniqueness of this study among existing literature which typically focuses on either parents' or teachers' views or on the differences between them.

The answers to these questions, provided by this thesis, will meaningfully contribute to the limited existing knowledge about rural sub-Saharan African parents' perspectives on schooling while illuminating their practices. By doing so, it will deepen knowledge about children's home learning environments and provide schools, local, national and international actors in Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa more broadly, with insight on the opportunities for supporting and forging positive relationships with parents.

3.8. Summary

This chapter has synthesized evidence around parental involvement to introduce key and emergent ideas, and reveal dominant missing and deficit narratives about rural, non-literate/numerate African parents' perspectives and practices. The chapter also presented the study's conceptual framework, a combination of Amartya Sen's capability approach and Bourdieu's social concepts. The dominant narratives hitherto presented provided a rationale for the study's research questions which, employing the Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework, seek to uncover the un[der]-represented voices and practices of rural African parents, and to explore the extent to which teachers' perspectives resonate with the extant literature. As the chapter demonstrated, the relational ontologies of Sen and Bourdieu strongly align with the subjectivist ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives adopted for this study. These are discussed next.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature and presented the conceptual framework that will be applied to the data to generate deeper insight into the study's questions. This chapter presents the overarching approach underpinning data generation. First, it discusses the study's main philosophical assumptions and describes the ethnographic methodology upon which it draws. Then, it details the application of a unique, context-driven ethics framework (Oyinloye, 2021). The chapter concludes by revisiting 'positionality' and its contribution to the development of this framework. Given the need to explain the framework and its application, this chapter focuses on methodology – methods will be discussed in the next.

4.2. The overall research approach

An ethnographic methodology underpinned by a constructivist paradigm and situated within research communities' worldviews was deemed appropriate for this study which aims to provide in-depth insight into parents' perspectives and practices around schooling in rural Africa. This section explains these.

4.2.1. A relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology

Although some argue that the difference between various forms of research is one of methods, others contend it is about views on the nature of reality, how we know it and how we go about knowing it (Hammersley, 2012), the three elements of a research paradigm which constitutes "a basic set of beliefs which guide [research] action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). These elements can also be reframed as the responses to the following philosophical questions:

Ontological – What is the nature of reality or what exists? What is the nature of knowledge?

Epistemological – How can we know reality or what exists? What is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched?

Methodological – How do we go about discovering knowledge or doing what we intend to do? What procedures can we use to acquire knowledge?

(Guba, 1990; Lincoln et al., 2011, 2017)

Achieving this study's aim requires substantive interaction between me (the researcher) and participants, within participants' everyday settings, towards an in-depth understanding of participants' lives and experiences. Evidently, such interaction subjects the study's outcome (or findings) to the interactive

process between me and what (and who) I research, and this subjectivism is the epistemological position within a constructivist paradigm, one which also assumes

- 1) an ontological relativism – not one but multiple realities exist “in the form of multiple mental constructions ...; – and
- 2) a methodological hermeneutics⁴⁸ / dialectic – the comparing and contrasting (dialectic) of re-presented, interpreted individual constructions (hermeneutics) to generate one or multiple constructions.

(Guba, 1990; Lincoln et al., 2017)

The ontological and epistemological positions within constructivism are both predicated on the varied constructions of the multiple realities which exist in people’s minds; as such, it is suggested, no real philosophical distinction exists between them (Guba, 1990). The existence of multiple realities is further evident in the paradigm’s methodological re-construction and re-presentation of individual participants’ constructions, analogous to the interpretive practices undertaken by qualitative researchers. Here, the researcher assumes an exploratory orientation towards understanding the perspectives and practices of participants in their socio-historical contexts and circumstances (Hammersley, 2012). Moreover, the interpretive ‘turn’ within constructivism acknowledges that what is claimed as knowledge has itself been constructed within a specific time and place, and not without the values approved by the arbiters of knowledge of that time and place (Lincoln, 1990, p. 79). For example, in this study, the understanding gleaned of participants’ lives occurred at a specific time and place and my interpretation, re-construction and re-presentation of it into this thesis adhered to the rules that govern knowledge production in the broader discipline of comparative and international education in the United Kingdom. Specifically, the narratives of schooling constructed by parents, teachers, children, and me during our interactions and my observations have been subsequently interpreted and re-presented to generate in-depth insight into parents’ perspectives and children’s schooling experiences in rural North central Nigeria.

Notably, the relativist ontology adopted here does not contend with the capability approach whose minimal metatheoretical assumptions, as was presented in **3.6**, are not inconsistent with either ontological realism or relativism: scholars of both persuasions have applied the framework in their analyses and work. Likewise, the ontological assumption is consistent with Bourdieu’s relational ontology (e.g., Bourdieu,

⁴⁸ Hermeneutics, meaning *interpretation*, originated from nineteenth century ideas about the interpretation of historical or ancient texts such as the Bible and Greek and Roman corpus (Hammersley, 2012) to reveal meanings intended by their authors (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). It was later challenged by a new form in the twentieth century – philosophical hermeneutics – which saw hermeneutics as interpretations or *constructions* which reflect the experiences and assumptions of the interpreter or in the case of research, researcher (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Methodological orientations within constructivism, particularly qualitative, heavily draw from this newer perspective.

1998; Hilgers & Mangez, 2015; Wacquant, 1989). However, it is worth noting that debates persist on whether Bourdieu's ontology is indeed realist or relativist, and his epistemology objective or subjective. A few examples illustrate. Those who perceive in his work an intractable durability of objective structures err towards realism (e.g., Ignatow & Robinson (2017); Jenkins (2002), as cited in Mills (2008); various critical realists, etc.). Vandenberghe (1999), likewise, accuses Bourdieu of 'ontological cowardice' for his skepticism of realism even where his writings apparently suggest otherwise (e.g., "social realist exists....in things and in minds" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 43)), and argues that his relational is, in fact, 'real'. Nash (2002) is not completely convinced of a realist view, given Bourdieu's deep roots in "anti-realist phenomenology"⁴⁹ (p. 273).

Others like Kale-Lostuvali (2016) argue that Bourdieu construes reality as constructed but avoids a commitment to relativism by anchoring his views on rationalism, "the primacy of reason over experience" (p. 278). For Nobbs (2017), Bourdieu's primary ontological commitment is 'ontological complicity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989), the relation between objectivism and subjectivism in the social world where structures (fields, positions) and agents (habitus, dispositions) interact to (re)constitute each other. These debates suggest on one hand that whichever position one wishes to attribute to Bourdieu, one is likely to find an adherent as well as evidence for it in his work. They suggest, on the other, that the relationality evident in Bourdieu is his way of eschewing this binary. He appears uninterested in claiming one position over the other and like Sen, positions his concepts as "a set of thinking tools visible through the results they yield" through empirical work (Wacquant, 1989, p. 50). He seems more interested in "confronting new objects than engaging in theoretical polemics" and perceives "nothing more sterile than epistemology or theory when it becomes a topic for society conversation and a substitute for research" (p. 50). For this study, I align with a relativist-relational view of Bourdieu which positions reality as a construction, the outcome of "the dialectic between mental structures and social structures" (Lizardo, 2010, p. 19) in particular contexts.

Finally, Harkness & Super's (1996) ethnotheories also align with this study's philosophical assumptions, given their primary location within cultural psychology (Mistry et al., 2003), a branch of psychology consistent with constructivism (Stevenson, 2020). Within the discipline, there are no objectively existing realities (Stevenson, 2020). The human mind and culture are indissoluble, and meaning is constructed from social relations through everyday practices within diverse cultural contexts. Methodologically, researchers glean insight into those meanings when they situate themselves within participants' naturalistic settings

⁴⁹ Phenomenology postulates that all knowledge or phenomena is embedded in immediate experiences which must be carefully described without the researcher's any prior assumptions (Hamersley, 2012)

(Stevenson, 2020) and describe and interpret the latter's experiences and understanding in the context of their everyday lives (Mistry et al., 2003).

Although other paradigms exist, for instance, positivism and its promulgation of experimental, quantitative measurement-based methods to find the 'truth' of the social world (Hammersley, 2012); and its prioritizing of principles of value-freedom, direct observation of theoretical terms and hypothesis testing, among others (Bryman, 2016); constructivism's relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology offer the most meaningful, context-appropriate way to approach the questions this study seeks to answer. However, eliciting participants' constructed meanings within their specific contexts implies a methodology that is primarily qualitative and non-experimental (Stevenson, 2020). The following elaborates the methodological approach used to determine the procedure through which data was generated to represent those meanings and thereby answer the study's research questions.

4.2.2. A qualitative research framework

Underpinned by constructivism, this research sought to interact with participants to explore, co-construct, re-construct and re-present their perspectives and practices within their own settings. These settings refer to the everyday settings in which life, work or play occurs and are often referred to as naturalistic settings (Hammersley, 2012, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For some scholars, it is these naturalistic qualities, along with interpretive ones, that distinguish qualitative from other types of research (e.g., quantitative) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). For others, the interpretive distinction is tenuous as quantitative research may also be used interpretively (Babones, 2016; Hammersley, 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Westerman, 2006). For instance, Hammersley (2012) cites an example of survey research (e.g., Knowledge, Aptitude and Practices questionnaires) typically used to explain changes in social behaviour. Given such contentions, Hammersley (2012, p. 12) offers six distinguishing features of qualitative research:

- (1) flexible and data-driven research design;
- (2) relatively unstructured data;
- (3) emphasis on the essential role of subjectivity in the research process;
- (4) study of a small number of (5) naturally occurring [or naturalistic] cases in detail; and
- (6) predominantly verbal, rather than, statistical forms of analysis.

All six features are characteristic of this exploratory study which positions participants as actors in their social lives and enables an in-depth understanding of these lives through "detailed examples, rich narratives, empathy and experience" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 33). These details, narratives, and experiences were co-constructed and re-presented in the study during interviews, observations, casual conversations,

field notes, audio recordings and photographs among others and were, in turn, constituted within a set of “interpretive, material practices” undertaken by qualitative researchers who “study things in their natural[istic] settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 10). As such, this study is also characterized by a seventh interpretive practice, one which sought simply to “listen, ask, record, [and] examine” participants’ perspectives and actions (Schwandt, 1998, p. 222). The outcome, then, of such exploratory, constructivist research, evidenced by this thesis, is a predominantly verbal, interpretive and thickly descriptive narrative account (Hammersley, 2012), one best suited to answering my research questions and fulfilling the study’s aim of providing rich, in-depth insight into parents’ perspectives and practices.

4.2.3. An ethnographic research

Various terms are used synonymously with research methodology including strategy (Bryman, 2008, cited in Hammersley, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017); methodological practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017); approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Erickson, 2011; Hammersley, 2012); and design (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For simplicity, this study uses methodological approach (or, approach) to refer to the process (Creswell, 2013) or the set of overarching procedures used to generate and represent the multiple realities that exist in participants’ minds relevant to the study’s area of interest. As already noted, this process is guided by a qualitative framework and among the various forms of qualitative research designs proposed by Creswell & Poth (2018), this research draws from ethnography. The following is an overview of this methodological approach and a justification of its appropriateness for this research.

Ethnography

Historically located in Euro-American anthropological accounts of the ways of life of colonized peoples in their local settings (Erickson, 2011), ethnography involves researching the shared beliefs, language and behavioural patterns of the everyday lives of a group of people with a shared culture⁵⁰ (Creswell, 2013). It is a “systematic approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 1) towards a ‘theorised account’ of the culture being studied (Delamont, 2008; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). O’Reilly (2012, p. 11) extends this theoretical orientation, positing that ethnography is underpinned by a ‘theoretical perspective’ which, among others,

- Views social life as the product of the daily interplay between structure and agency;
- Examines, reflexively, the researcher’s role in the construction of social life; and

⁵⁰ The Bourdieuan definition of culture in 3.5 aligns with LeCompte & Schensul (2010, p. 68)’s: 1) an ‘abstract’ construct created as people interact and engage in shared activities and replicate or negotiate “socially based interpretations of behaviour” and 2) ‘shared meanings’ conveyed through language, symbols and other forms of communication.

- Determines, reflexively, the methods to draw upon and apply

For Atkinson & Hammersley (2007), it is this deliberate, systematic approach (and the theorization which follows from it) which distinguishes ethnography from the everyday processes that individuals, as non-researchers, use to make sense of their lives. For them, ethnography in practice uses diverse sources of data and

...usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts... (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 3)

So key is participating and watching – i.e., participant observation– in ethnography that Delamont (2008, 2016) suggests the terms ethnography and participant observation may be used synonymously because they both refer to being situated within a setting, watching and interacting with people to understand the meanings they make of their lives. However, she argues that ethnography is a broader term which encompasses both participant observation and fieldwork – the setting and the period (of time) during which data are generated. Bryman (2016) agrees, noting that although participant observation and the interaction inherent within it necessitates the use of other data generation methods, the term itself appears to imply only observation and, as such, limits understanding of its breadth. As alluded to in the above definition by Atkinson & Hammersley (2007), ethnography draws on various sources of data including participant observation; interviews; and documentary and artefactual evidence, among others. The scholars go on to identify key features of ethnographic work, some of which are also features of qualitative research described in the previous section:

- 1) Study in everyday, usually non-experimental or high structured, settings;
- 2) Multi-method data generation, key among which are participant observation and formal/informal conversations;
- 3) Unstructured data generation using a flexible research design, and an inductive analysis;
- 4) Focus on few cases to facilitate in-depth study; and
- 5) Interpretive analysis towards descriptions, explanations, and theories.

As the above definitions imply, ethnography is beyond a fun adventure in a distant, exotic horizon. Rather, it is an immersive, systematic, and theoretically informed way of observing and interacting with a group of culture-sharing people within their everyday settings in order to make sense of the meanings such people make of their lives. Notably, conceptions of ethnography have changed over time. While earlier anthropological ethnography involved living with participants in their communities for a long period of

time (i.e., at least a year), participating, observing, interviewing and collecting artefacts (Hammerlsey, 2006), current practices of ethnography are diverse though they may share some key features or methods (Hammersley, 2018). As will be shown in **5.4**, this study is not an ethnography in the early anthropological tradition of sustained residence and immersion within participants' communities for one or several year(s). Rather, it employs ethnography as a broad term to convey the methodological approach drawn from. Specifically, and as will be shown in subsequent sections, this study is *ethnographic* because it

- 1) Uses (various types of) interviews and participant observation as its main methods;
- 2) Occurs steadily in participants' contexts over an extended period of time;
- 3) Involves a study of culture;
- 4) Reflexively examines my role in and the methods of the research; and
- 5) [it] is guided by a theoretical framework which underscores the relationship between structure and agency as was shown in the previous chapter.

As has been shown, ethnography, and, by extension, ethnographic approaches, is concerned with the meanings people make of their lives or the sense they make of their realities within their contexts. Thus, it is concerned with how people view and construct their own social worlds. This is consistent with the ontological stance of a constructivist paradigm which views reality as multiple mental constructions, based on experiences and social interactions in specific local settings (Lincoln et al., 2017). The paradigm's typical methodology of qualitative approaches which employ naturalistic methods such as interviews and observations (Lincoln et al., 2017) underpins this study's ethnographic methodological approach. Moreover, given the study's interest in exploring schooling among a specific culture-sharing people within a specific setting, an ethnographic approach enables an exploration of this phenomenon as embedded, not apart from, this culture. Doing this adds "rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p. 10) and enables the rich, descriptive account that is commonly the output of ethnographic research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

Thus far, it has been demonstrated how this study is appropriately underpinned by a constructivist paradigm which presupposes an ontological relativism, an epistemological subjectivism, and a methodological hermeneutics-dialectics and which attempts to understand how social life is negotiated, particularly how participants construct, co-construct and re-construct their experiences within their existing contexts. It has also just been shown how drawing from ethnography is an appropriate methodological approach for this study. However, the beginning of this section highlighted ethnography's colonial underpinnings. This 'colonial gaze', which by implication produced hegemonic research, persists in neocolonial forms of research, including qualitative ethnographic research, particularly in and on indigenous (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) and ethnocultural communities (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006). Denzin & Lincoln (2017) note that indigenous communities have begun to resist such research by developing new

methodologies, central to which are considerations of the research ethics necessary for creating and sustaining reciprocal and nurturing relationships between researchers and participants (e.g., Smith, 1999). Trimble & Mohatt (2006) likewise highlight the importance of research ethics but focus on the need for researchers to develop virtue ethics towards establishing responsible partnerships with ethnocultural communities. Adopting a 'de-colonial gaze,' I describe next the principles of a unique virtue ethics framework and how I integrated it within this study's ethnographic methodology to disrupt the 'colonial gaze' on the study's *Yorùbá* communities.

4.3. The *Ọmọlúàbí* researcher: A moral ethical framework

In my previous professional life described in **1.1**, I was often dissatisfied with how research was conducted by the Euro-American consultants we hired. The process was typically extractive, sometimes exploitative⁵¹, and almost always underpinned by positivist research designs which silenced the specificities of the settings in which we worked. Therefore, through my Ph.D., I sought to explore a different way of researching rural, economically disadvantaged populations which encompassed the values – beliefs or moral norms (Macfarlane, 2009) – required to ensure participants truly felt valued, honoured, and respected throughout the study. Given the specificity of research communities, these values, I felt, went beyond the principles in my institutional (The Open University, 2018) and disciplinary (BERA, 2018) ethics guidance documents. Although these documents provided integral guiding principles for this study (institutional ethics approval was obtained prior to data generation – *HREC/3021/Oyinloye*), their generality and applicability meant they needed to be complemented with considerations tailored to the needs of communities. The values underpinning this different approach were, on one hand, related to issues of practical ethics arising during the study (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) and those related to the character or virtues (Macfarlane, 2009) I needed to respond to those practical ethical issues. Notably, although institutional ethics approval was obtained before fieldwork (and therefore application of the approach), the thinking around the approach and the socio-cultural values it sought to adopt and actualize were evident in the pre-approval discussions with the institutional ethics committee. The following discusses the approach.

4.3.1. A situated ethical approach

⁵¹ Extractive broadly refers to research conducted away from researchers' primary contexts with data 'extracted' from participants and taken away for analysis and where participants usually never see researchers again or hear of the findings (Sehrsweeney & Robertson, 2018). Exploitative refers more to participants' receipt of little or no benefit or reciprocity for their contribution.

To unpack and respond to practical ethical issues, Guillemin & Gillam (2004) suggest employing reflexivity, the recognition that a researcher is shaped by their “socio-historically conferred” values and interests (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 15) including the “personal standpoints and positionality through which they perceive gendered, classed, age-graded, and raced/ethnicized ways of seeing and feeling the world” (Erickson, 2011, p. 46). In ethnographic research, this recognition is continuous and reflects upon the researcher’s role in co-constructing and re-representing participants’ narratives and lived experiences (O’Reilly, 2012). Reflexivity is also central to minimizing issues of power between researcher and participants and reciprocating the latter’s contribution (Baker et al., 2016).

Indeed, Macfarlane (2009) suggests reflexivity is one of the virtues or “excellencies of character” of a good researcher, alongside Aristotelian virtues of courage, respectfulness, resoluteness, sincerity, and humility, which offer a moral basis and encourage researchers, as individuals, to strive for excellence in character. For him, moral virtues are about “good habits or dispositions to do the right or proper thing” (p. 36) and researchers who are good persons are “more likely to do the right thing” as good researchers (p.33). Being a good researcher is, however, inextricably linked to researching with integrity comprising both good *moral* and *intellectual* practices. For Stutchbury and Fox (2009), research integrity is, in fact, an ethical issue and for a researcher to act ethically, they must first think morally, that is, the [research] decisions they make should have a “defensible moral basis” (p. 489). They highlight two classical Euro-Western moral philosophies: deontology, which requires doing one’s duty (or what is ‘right’) without concern for the consequences; and consequentialism (or utilitarianism), which requires judging what is ‘right’ based on whether that ‘thing’ produces the greatest advantages for the greatest number of people. They produce a questions-based framework which combines deontological and consequentialist considerations with ecological (codes of practice, legal issues, resource use, etc.) and relational dimensions (trust, respect and confirmation of findings). They argue that their framework extends existing codes and principles because of its moral underpinnings and attention to issues of methodology and the consequences of research for participants.

Macfarlane’s and Stutchbury and Fox’s contributions underscore the need to embed moralistic thinking into research ethics, alongside existing ethics codes and principles. However, moral thinking, and the theories underpinning them, are not indissoluble from the epistemologies of the contexts in which they emerge. As Macfarlane (2009) concedes, virtues themselves are socio-historical and temporal, i.e., they are rooted in specific social and historical contexts and subject to the changes in those contexts over time. In this study, I adopt the Yorùbá moral and philosophical concept of *Ọmọlúàbí* as the overarching moral basis of my ethics framework, the *Ọmọlúàbí moral ethical* framework. A moral ethical framework, similar to Stutchbury and Fox (2009)’s ethical grid, extends reflexivity by complementing it with virtues (or morals). Gewirtz and Cribb (2006) offer a useful way of understanding what might be called the reflexivity spectrum,

within which this study's moral ethical framework lies. As outlined in **Table 4.1** below, their five-part *ethical* reflexivity framework includes the general notion of reflexivity as defined earlier (parts a to c); a moral consciousness (part d); and a responsibility for the political and ethical implications of research (part e):

Table 4.1 A reflexivity spectrum (adapted from Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006)

(a)	Explicitness	About the research's value assumptions and evaluative judgments	Reflexivity (a-c)	Moral ethical reflexivity (a-d)	Ethical reflexivity (a-e)
(b)	Defensibility	Of those assumptions and judgements			
(c)	Acknowledgement	Of (and responsiveness to) the tensions between the embedded values			
(d)	Seriousness	Of the practical judgement and dilemmas of those being researched			
(e)	Responsibility	For the political and ethical implications of the research			

The moral ethical framework adopted for this study lies within the spectrum though it does not adopt a political stance. While the study may produce political implications, its goal remains that of generating knowledge to answer its research questions (Hammersley, 2008). The *Ọmọ́lúàbí* moral ethical framework, therefore, is a situated ethics approach (Simons & Usher, 2000; Tikly & Bond, 2013), a locally situated, moralistic framework which extends notions of reflexivity by virtues grounded in the settings in which data generation occurs. It provides an appropriate alternative to “dominant notions of objective and universalistic morality” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p. 3) and “affirms diversity in ethical thought” (Tikly & Bond, p. 436) by integrating participants’ conception of ethics into the overarching ethics framework for research. Next, I briefly explain the concept of *Ọmọ́lúàbí* and explain how I applied it as a moral ethical framework in this study.

4.3.2. Who is an *Ọmọ́lúàbí*?

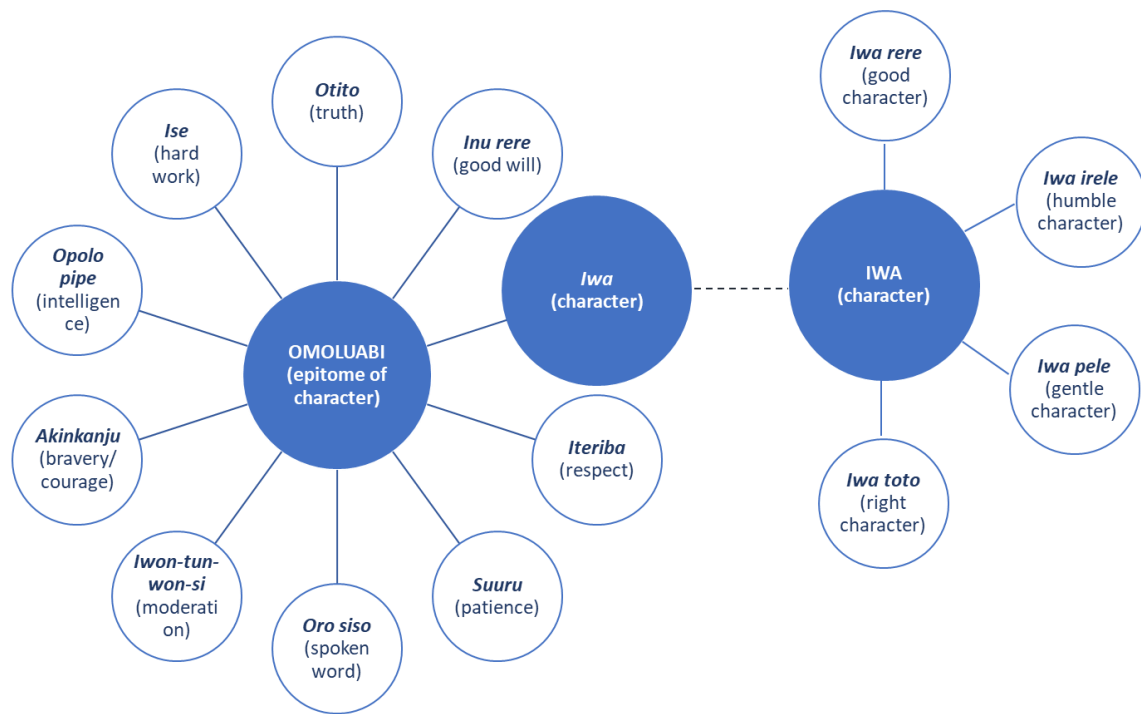
For the *Yorùbás*, an *Ọmọ́lúàbí* is an ideal being, the “epitome of morality and good character” (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018, p. 42). An *Ọmọ́lúàbí* is a good, virtuous, or morally upright person (Oyeshile, 2001-2002) in whom is found all the “excellencies of character” required for goodness in a person. Such excellencies of character are not an end in themselves but are instrumental for the harmonious functioning of the collective (Oyeshile, 2001-2002). In other words, the virtues of *Ọmọ́lúàbí* are expected to be demonstrated not only for the benefit of the individual, but also for their family, community and the larger society (Olanipekun, 2017). This promotion of collective harmony – and prevention of collective disharmony – also resonates with the ethics of *ubuntu* (Metz, 2007) and underscores *Yorùbá* people's *ethical collectivism* (see **3.4.1**).

The term *Ọmọ́lúàbí* is made up of the constituents *ọmọ* (meaning child) + *olu-ìwà* (or *oluwà*, *chief of character*) + *bí* (*give birth to*) and thus, directly translates to *the child whom the chief of character begets*

(Fayemi, 2009). As such, *ìwà* or *character* holds a central position within the concept of *Ọmọlúàbí* and is so highly regarded, Oyeshile (2001-2002) notes, that for the *Yorùbás*, it is “one of the aims of human existence” (p. 93). Moreover, *ìwà* is also often used to qualify a *type* of character. For instance, a core type of *ìwà* is *ìwà pẹlẹ* (gentle/mild character) and is related to *ìwà jẹjẹ* and *ìwà tútù* (where *jẹjẹ* means *gentle* and *tútù* literally means *cold* but is translated as *temperate*) (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). There are also *ìwà irẹlẹ* (*humble* character or *humility*), *ìwà itẹríba* (*respectful* character), *ìwà tòótọ* (*right* character) and *ìwà rere* (*good* character/behavior) (Fayemi, 2009; Olanipekun, 2017). *Ìwà itẹríba* (*respect*), sometimes used to qualify *ìwà*, is considered important enough to merit its own position alongside *ìwà* as one of the virtues which constitute *Ọmọlúàbí* (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). These correlates and derivatives of *ìwà*, along with other virtues such as *ọrọ síṣọ* (*intelligent spoken word*), *inú rere* (*goodwill, good mind or generosity* towards others), *òtítọ* (*truth*), *akinkanjú* (*bravery/courage*), *ọpọlọ pípé* (*intelligence*) and *isẹ* (*hard work*) constitute the main elements of *Ọmọlúàbí* (Abimbola, 1975, cited in Ayodele, 2016). Oyebade & Azenabor (2018) include two additional elements – *sùúrù* (*patience*) and *ìwòn-tún-wòn-sì* (*moderation*) which they suggest along with the other virtues, comprise a list of non-exhaustive virtues broadly accepted by *Yorùbá* scholars as being constitutive of *Ọmọlúàbí*.

Notably, there are similarities between the virtues of *Ọmọlúàbí* and Macfarlane (2009)’s six research virtues: courage, respectfulness, resoluteness, sincerity, humility, and reflexivity. Only two from Macfarlane appear to be missing in *Ọmọlúàbí*: resoluteness and reflexivity, and this is not surprising as Macfarlane’s virtues are research specific even if influenced and inspired by Aristotelian and European moral virtues. As Macfarlane himself suggests, certain virtues are common across diverse cultures around the world, though their interpretations and applications may vary. Moreover, the emphasis in the application of the *Ọmọlúàbí* moral ethical framework, as will be shown next, was on the cultural expressions of these virtues. The following is an illustration of *Ọmọlúàbí* using the virtues described above:

Figure 4.1 *Omólúàbí*, illustrated



4.3.3. An *Omólúàbí* moral ethical framework

Omólúàbí is a recommended moral code for human existence (Lawuyi, 2018) which affirms individuals' ability to act virtuously or virtuelessly under any circumstance. It is a goal one is expected to strive for and consistently act towards and it is one which begins in childhood: it holds educational value and is inherent within *Yorùbá* traditional education whose primary goal is to produce an *Omólúàbí* youth/adult (Akinyemi, 2003; Dada, 2018). Positioning *Omólúàbí* as a recommendation – rather than a decree – also acknowledges the inherent difficulty in becoming one as individuals contend with the variant experiences in everyday existence. In spoken *Yorùbá* moreover, *Omólúàbí* is often used situationally to describe someone who has acted like one or to urge individuals to act like one under certain circumstances. These points situate my application of *Omólúàbí* 1) as guiding virtues for this study's ethics approach; and 2) to develop a set of principles applied throughout the research, particularly during fieldwork. These principles are *continuity*; *adherence to local and national processes*; *adaptation to local ways of being and doing*; and *provision of tangible benefit*. Each is hereby described (ordered randomly, not hierarchically).

Continuity

Continuity refers to continuous engagement with research participants before, during and after data has been generated. It involves at least one return to participants' settings and contrasts predominant extractive research practices, with the post data generation engagement providing an opportunity to express gratitude and share ideas/findings, thereby validating data re-representation and interpretation.

Although I had planned to continuously engage with participants, the consequences of extraction came to the fore during initial interactions. During my second interaction with a grandmother in the second community, she mentioned previous Nigerians who had come to ask personal, invasive questions:

Grandmother1: They even did to the point where they asked, how many animals do you have, how many goats...

B: Was it the government who was asking that one or...

Grandmother1: Uhnn (yes)...that's how they brought, brought thing that day is it, even, we took photographs, all of it. We didn't see anything [afterwards]. They came to ask, 'do you have jobs? Do you have jobs or do you not have jobs? How many children are you teaching (i.e., sending to school), how many children are you raising?'

B: Uhnn....

Grandmother1: Once they finish asking, they go!

B: And you don't see them again?

Grandmother1: Ahh! We don't see them again o!

Grandmother1 Co-wife: You won't see them again! Since that day!

B: Uhnn...

....

Grandmother1: We'll tell them the names of our mothers, that we ought not to tell people, we'll tell them the names of our fathers...

(Grandmother1commB 2018/12/19)

This telling exchange confirmed that embedding continuity within the research was the *ìwà tòótọ́*, the right thing, and in this research, continuity is embedded in two ways. First, within the data generation process through multiple visits to communities over the intensive fieldwork period. Given the ethnographic methodological approach and its requirement of interacting and observing participants in their naturalistic settings over a prolonged period, I was in communities nearly every school day, walking around, talking or chatting with residents, both those being interviewed/observed and otherwise. Therefore, participants saw me repeatedly over fieldwork and became accustomed to my presence. Two, as an overarching fieldwork approach which saw an introductory, scoping visit to schools; fieldwork in schools and communities; a follow-up visit; and (planned after thesis examination depending on COVID-19 travel possibilities) a dissemination visit with presentation of a hardcopy thesis to schools and communities as a symbolic, tangible, outcome of their contribution. The below table highlights these:

Table 4.2 Stages of continuous engagement with participants

Stage #	Item	Description	Date
1	Scoping and local approval	Visits to local education officials to seek official approval and to prospective communities to gauge interest in research	June 18 to 29, 2018
2	Data generation (fieldwork)	Period of interaction (interviews, observations) – fieldwork with selected research participants in the two communities	November 24, 2018 to March 31, 2019
3	Follow-up, validation, and reciprocity	Checking of emergent findings with participants, including follow-up questions and provision of tangible benefit to first community*	November 10 to 29, 2018
4	Dissemination (planned)	Presentation of thesis hard copy to schools/communities and briefs to local education officials	TBD (late 2021)

*tangible benefit was provided to the first community in December 2020, as will be discussed shortly

The various stages required significant resources often unavailable to doctoral researchers. I was lucky to have received a fieldwork grant from the British Association of International & Comparative Education which, in combination with a research grant by The Open University, facilitated stages one to three. However, because of my commitment to continuity, I was prepared to contribute personal funds to implement it and in fact, I had already departed for stage two before the grant was awarded⁵². Accordingly, stage four will be personally funded. This principle also implied that it was imperative to remain connected with communities between stages (typically through school heads). This deepened continuity by reaffirming that school-communities were still happy to be involved with the research thereby providing continuous consent (Helgesson & Eriksson, 2011); and enabling a re-negotiation of confidentiality and re-representation i.e., how participants wanted to be represented in the thesis and any potential post-submission dissemination efforts (e.g., government briefs, public presentations, etc.). Though these were discussed continuously in stage two, the study's multi-staged, iterative, and reflexive nature engendered new ideas and (potentially) influenced participants' views over time about how they wanted to be identified in its output. These issues were revisited between stages three and four and the agreements are reflected in the extent of disclosure of participants' and communities' names in this thesis.

Adherence to local and national processes

This principle extended *iwà ìtẹ́rìbà* (respect) towards institutional processes in Nigeria. As there exists no ethics committee in the Federal Ministry of Education, that of the Federal Ministry of Health (FMH) served as a suitable alternative, given it also guides research with human participants, encouraging researchers to not only respect the attitudes and "socio-cultural values of the community and its institutions" but to also engage with participants' communities (NHREC, 2007, p. 44). Training on the *Nigeria National Code for Health Research Ethics* (NNCHRE) was completed (NHREC/TR/02/06/2007a) and ethics approval was

⁵² My fieldwork schedule was critical to being able to generate data before the February/March 2019 Federal and state elections and I was prepared to make some financial sacrifices accordingly. The fieldwork grant reduced the extent of these.

obtained from the FMH (NHREC/01/01/2007-23/09/2018) before stage two. The study was also guided by the FMH's *Policy Statement Regarding Enrolment of Children in Research in Nigeria* (PS2.1016) (NHREC, 2016).

My application of *ìwà ìtẹ́ríba* also extended beyond national procedural ethics to local ones, and stage one was critical for this. After obtaining verbal agreement for the research from local officials, KC1 and I visited prospective schools to enquire about their and their communities' interest⁵³. Once schools had agreed to participate and affirmed their communities' interest, we relayed these to local officials who provided three approval letters: a general one granting approval to conduct the study within the LG; and one addressed to each school granting approval for the study within the school (these have not been included in this thesis because they contain identifying information).

Adaptation to local ways of being and doing

The third principle is also related to the second in that it is an extension of *ìwà ìtẹ́ríba* (respect), that is, the *ìtẹ́ríba* inherent in an adaptation to local ways of being and doing which manifest the broadly accepted virtues of *Ọmọ́lúàbí*. However, this is not to claim that all participants were *Ọmọ́lúàbís* – far from it as some lied and others were simply not 'nice' or good, such as the school head who lied and repeatedly gave me the wrong phone number – or that I myself was the personification of *Ọmọ́lúàbí*. It is nevertheless to identify the ways I strove to become one through a demonstration of some of its virtues.

The first, *ìtẹ́ríba*, was demonstrated through my adaptation to communities' modes of dressing. Upon arrival, when I realized that participants' communities were Muslim communities, I knew it would be necessary for me to dress modestly (see e.g., Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Siwale, 2015). But my own definition of modesty required some adjustment. Sitting beside a male participant in my third week in the first community in fitted black trousers, a loose long-sleeved shirt and a thick multicoloured pashmina scarf draped over my head and shoulders to mimic a hijab, waiting for the best moment to begin to tell him who I was and why I had come, he began, "In Islam, it is not good not to cover your head because of what men see. Even in Christianity, it is not good." He continued for a few minutes about the importance of covering my head and delinked his *strong* suggestion from religiosity by pointing out, rightfully, that both Christian and Muslim *Yorùbá* women cover their heads and I ought to do the same as one. Being thus advised, I set about not to repeat the same mistake⁵⁴. My main fieldwork uniform thence consisted of wide-

⁵³ Officially, schools may indicate interest but cannot grant approval.

⁵⁴ Though this represents in some ways a *patriarchal bargain* (Kandiyoti, 1988 cited in Sultana, 2007) – a compromise between achieving one's study aims as a woman (through generating data) and not offending a male participant who has a specific understanding of what a woman should be or do – for me, it was much more a cultural bargain, one which aligned with the moral ethical framework.

leg trousers paired with a variety of loose tee-shirts, head wrap cut from colourful cotton fabric called *ankara* and the pashmina referred to above (which sometimes doubled as a head wrap).

With teachers, I hitchhiked, car hopped, and car shared the same way they did to get to school. In schools and communities, I called people by their common names and perfected my greeting for which I was frequently opportuned as there was always someone seated outside along the various paths I walked between schools and communities. I bought and enjoyed local food and snacks from the female participants who sold them. I must have blended in convincingly with my dispositions and appearance as some teachers thought I was Muslim (Fieldnotes 2019/01/24) while others marveled that it was impossible to tell I was not from the area because I spoke *Yorùbá*, dressed locally, knew how to greet⁵⁵ and was very familiar with community members (Fieldnotes 2019/03/21).

Adapting to local ways of being and doing also required sensible use of *òrò síṣò* (spoken word) and my linguistic insiderness was a boon. For instance, greetings were meaningless without the accompanying 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' and eye contact directed at those being greeted. It was common for me to mouth multiple greetings and perform individual curtsies to groups of women or men seated together as each required their own separate greeting. Usage of the accurate pronoun was critical for *ìtẹ̀ríba* during dialogue with anyone older, even only by a few months.

In striving for *òtítọ́* (truth), I disclosed personal details about myself, some of which I knew would leave me open to scrutiny and unsolicited counsel. Of great interest to participants in the first community in particular were my plans to bear children. The participant who counselled me to cover my head took it upon himself, during another interaction, to counsel me about my ticking biological clock. When I saw him during stage three, we greeted effusively until, being prodded by him, I confessed that I was no closer to having children than the last time he saw me. His concerns had been similarly echoed during stage two by another male participant and a co-wife of one of the female participants, in the same community. Admittedly, these scenarios were not comfortable but I accepted them in stride because it was participants' way of getting to know me and building trust. Moreover, the male participant who first counselled me was a respected member of the community and his granting me audience indicated visible tacit approval of my presence and research which indicated to others I was a trusted person with whom they could also engage. This trust was signalled relatively early in the first community by a grandmother who, when asked if she had any questions, wanted to know what my research meant "because if we don't trust you that there's

⁵⁵ Greeting is a culturally significant way of showing *ìtẹ̀ríba* for seniority. Traditionally, to greet one's elder, a woman kneels with both knees while a man prostrates and lays flat on the ground. It is now acceptable for women to kneel halfway or partially (like a curtsy) and for men to bow with their arms outstretched. I generally applied the conventional form.

no trouble, we won't be saying all the things we're saying, not that we won't be saying it, we won't be saying *all* of it..." [participant emphasis] (Grandmother4commA 2018/12/10).

Isé (hard work), *ìwòn-tún-wòn-sì* (moderation) and *sùúrù* (patience) are also inherent in adapting locally to *Qmólúàbí*, with the latter two going hand in hand. Hard work was evident in the physicality of stage two during which I walked around communities in the high 30s and low 40s Celsius African sun in search of participants, sometimes returning to someone's home thrice to check on them. In the more geographically spread out second community, my farthest home was a 35minute walk from school in one direction. After school observation days were particularly challenging as they often occurred on a hungry stomach: it was too early to eat in the morning and neither school had food vendors in stage two. However, my physical and other efforts had not gone unnoticed. I felt a sense of pride when, towards the end of stage two, the second school head told KC1 that I "was a good girl and [I was] not lazy" (i.e., the vice of *isé*) (Fieldnotes 2019/02/18). About the same period, the grandmother who earlier asked what the research meant, saw me walking in the sun and shouted, "for me, you have already passed!" acknowledging my visible physical effort. Moderation and patience were inherent in the slow and steady ethnographic fieldwork approach where I interviewed participants, sometimes very briefly, and often waited patiently while they finished what they were doing. At particularly busy or inappropriate times, I chose not to conduct or discontinued an interview, such as when one of the participants received news of a young relative's death.

Lastly, I demonstrated the virtue of *akínkanjú* (courage) when though anxiety-ridden (Delamont, 2016), I proceeded to conduct research in two rural, Muslim communities in Nigeria with whom I had no prior relationship as an unmarried, non-Muslim, childless, and 'lone' female researcher. I was lone not just physically, but also because I was unattached to a charitable or international development project which may have provided some logistical or other support, as is often the practice with international education research. Thus, I required courage to enter communities, despite my dreadful anticipation, and remain in it for as long as I did amidst the physical, emotional, and psychological challenges often common in doctoral fieldwork in international contexts (Naveed et al., 2017).

Provision of tangible benefit

This final principle aligns with the virtue of *inú rere* (goodwill, good mind or generosity towards others) and is inextricably linked with the *ìwà tòótọ́* (right character) of the first. Each stage of continuous engagement required more of participants' time and contribution and an *Qmólúàbí* does not take something significant from others without giving something commensurate in return, at least not continuously.

The grandmother who reproved those who had come to ask personal invasive questions and never returned recalled unfulfilled promises of fertilizer. During our very first interaction in stage two as she peeled cassava with her co-wife, she recalled their other unfulfilled promises:

...

Grandmother1: They have come like this once before too, that they said they would do something for us and they didn't!

Grandmother1 Co-wife: ...we're fed up!

Grandmother1: They have asked questions...

B: Who were they?

Grandmother1: That they said...they were like an association like this...they were like this...they were many that day!

B: They were many?

Grandmother1: Ehnn...they said...they went to *Father6's* village too...they said, 'what work do you do? How many animals do you have'? We told them everything! They asked, 'where do you dry it'? We said 'on the road'...they said they'll do cement, they'll do.... we didn't see anyone!

Grandmother1 co-wife: And they said we should bring money⁵⁶!

Grandmother1: Those are the 'bring money' ones!

...

(05/12/2018)

Though I was being excoriated for the sins of my predecessors (see Morrow, 2009), the exchange raised again to the fore the unresolved issue of compensation which I had noted in my institutional ethics application would entail providing in-kind materials to participants upon fieldwork completion. Throughout stage two, I was not at ease, not only because of the methodological challenges a lack of pre-appreciation created⁵⁷, but also because of my moral unease at the thought of *stealing* participants' stories (Pittaway et al., 2010) given I had institutionally ethically committed to only provide inexpensive in-kind items at end of stage three. Furthermore, as a 'lone' researcher, I could not hide under the assumption that had I been attached with a project, the project would already be providing benefits to participants such that I could *get away* without doing so or with doing very little.

⁵⁶ A similarly shocking exploitative experience was recounted in the first community. Female participants spoke of people (who were purportedly connected with the state government) who came sometime before fieldwork under the guise of a government agro-lending scheme, interviewed people, obtained personal information and collected N1,000 (about £2) from each interested person. They were never seen again.

⁵⁷ Research interest in the first community was high at the start of stage 2 with women/men urging me to write down their names in anticipation of some benefit (e.g., money, gifts, jobs, government connections, etc). This interest waned as it became there was none. In the second, one participant (Father3) began to make himself unavailable whenever I approached.

The moral unease arose from my recognition that it was not *ìwà tòótọ́* (the right character) to depart communities at the end of stage two having given nothing of value in exchange for stories which would be re-presented in a thesis, a successful defense of which would result in the conferment of a Ph.D. and unequivocally translate into tangible (future earned income) and intangible benefits (e.g., status, prestige, position, etc.) for myself. My nongiving was not lost on participants either for they came to accept that I had nothing to give even if they might have hoped otherwise. As casually remarked during stage two by one female participant to a neighbour who walked by and asked what I was *again* doing there (she had seen me multiple times during stage two), “she is not giving us anything, she is just collecting words out of our mouths.”

Exchange is central to reciprocity which is the “respectful nature of good research relationships and exchanges that are essential in... research” (Maiter et al., 2008, p. 307). Extending this, Pittaway et al. (2010) suggest reciprocity seeks to provide ‘direct, tangible benefit’ as a trade-off for the ‘risks and costs’ of research participation (p. 234), enabling research to produce tangible, valuable outcomes for participants as well as researchers. Such tangible benefit, they note, should be of real value and should have been determined by communities themselves. Seeking meaningful reciprocity to communities, I orchestrated a fundraising campaign after stage two to construct boreholes in each school, water having been unanimously identified by both communities as a critical need. Donations received from supervisors, colleagues and friends were sufficient for only one borehole, therefore in consultation with my key contacts, we installed that of the second community in stage three (November 2019) and continued to raise funds for the first community thereafter. That of the first was installed during the December 2020 school holidays and also serves the secondary school located within the compound. Both boreholes became a critical amenity during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic which heightened sanitation requirements. Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly disadvantaged, with only 38% of primary schools with basic handwashing facilities (and likely significantly lower for rural Nigerian primary schools) (UN, 2020). I personally contributed 35% (£400) and 40% (£600) towards the first and second boreholes respectively, pictured below:

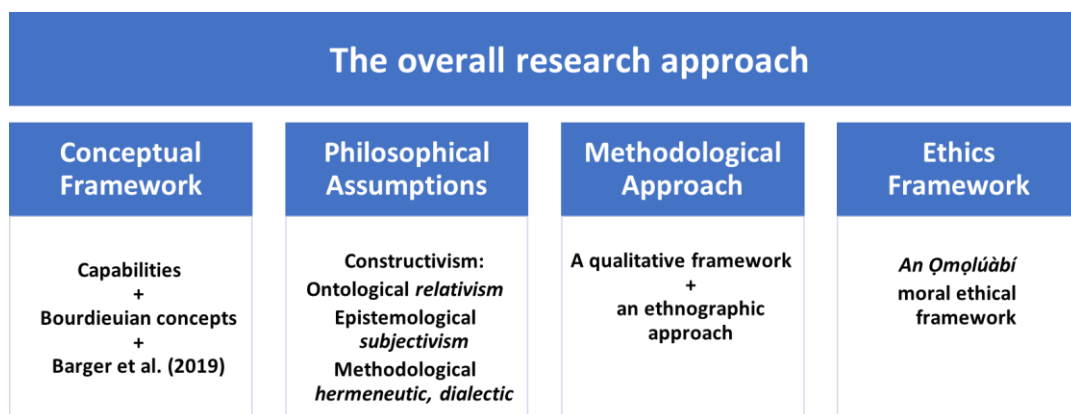
Figure 4.2 Boreholes, schoolB (left) and schoolA (right)



Notably, the decision to reciprocate at the school level, and to do so after data generation, mitigated real ethical concerns about potentially negative effects of individual inducements on relational communal dynamics.

This section has detailed this study's unique *Ọmọlúàbí* moral ethical framework and the application of its virtues through culturally situated principles of *continuity*; *adherence to local and national processes*; *adaptation to local ways of being and doing*; and the *provision of tangible benefit*. The framework's uniqueness centres on its incorporation of participants' ethics worldviews into the methodological process that guides research activity. Moreover, the framework fits within the study's broader constructivist underpinnings and ethnographic methodological approach which value the meanings people give to their worlds within their everyday settings. The study's overall approach is illustrated below:

Figure 4.3 The overall research approach



4.4. Positionality revisited: The *Ọmọlúàbí* researcher

The *Ọmọlúàbí* framework not only applied reflexivity as a situated, moral framework, it addressed the challenges of positionality raised in 1.2 by enabling a practical response to my educational and class privilege. For instance, adapting to local ways of being and doing minimized perceived class differences in physical (through physical appearance) and non-physical ways. The hitchhiking and car-sharing practices proved necessary to reposition and dissociate myself from a perceived alignment with my extractive predecessors. Although I had the means to hire a car or taxi to and from each community every day, doing so would have been insensible as many teachers struggled to pay the daily £1.50 (or 700Naira) average round trip fare to school (for other rural teachers travelling further than me, the fare was at least double this amount). Thus, being seen arriving in a taxi every morning in either community would have negatively altered perceptions of me and contradicted my repeated assertions that I was neither a government official (and had no connections to political and economic power) nor staff of a well-endowed international charitable organization. At times there were simply no alternatives to hitchhiking: the local public buses and taxis operated inconsistently and included so much waiting (to fill up with passengers) that often, those who hitchhiked arrived at school before me. Moreover, the *ìwà rere* (good character) I strove to manifest would not permit me to flaunt my wealth in participants' faces. In other non-physical ways, I was conscious of not visibly spending large notes of money (i.e., anything above £1 or 400Naira) and as alluded to earlier, bought and ate what local people did.

Privilege and power are intertwined and while I was successfully able to manage and, in many ways, limit perceptions of my privilege, there was less I could do with those of my power – or influence for change – which only seemed to heighten as I further revealed my self. Despite my insistence that I had none, my self revelations (e.g., where I had come from, my previous professional experiences, field working, etc.) only increased perceptions of it. My visible educational abilities – writing in English, and the typed printed forms and interview guides I carried around – and my residence outside Nigeria contributed to my being perceived as a conduit to the government, to whom participants appealed for assistance for their schools, livelihoods and communities. During an interaction in stage two with a family in the first community, the mother appealed:

And we're looking for, we're looking for help from there, because not all parents have the power (capacity) to take care of children all that much. They should help us out, from school also. This school is even, this our school is something that we want the government to help us out there. The ceiling is not good. Even the class that they're teaching our children, the bosses (teachers) are managing them. It's not good enough. They should help us. And there's no water in school! There's

no water in school for them at all, at all! Even as those bosses (teachers) want to try for them, the classes are not enough! They don't have enough classes! (Mother5commB 18/12/2018)

Later during the same interaction, the father directed his appeal at me:

Father5: So, what do I again want to...ehn ehn! I want there to be electricity there. Because if you, if you put, put the computer thing there...That thing of water that I want you to put there, ehnnn either borehole or solar energy, the one that is using sunlight, the one that God gives you the capacity or the one which is using electricity. That of solar energy, ehnnn, that of solar energy, or borehole. Or the one which is using electricity. The one which God gives you the capacity in, between those three ways, either borehole, ehnnn, solar energy, ehnnnn, that of electricity...

B: Is it me, is it me that you want to do it? I don't... [laughs nervously]

Father5: Ehnn ehnnn, it's wherever (i.e., whomever) you take it to is it.

Responding to these required an examination of my positionality, inherent in my application of *Qmqlùàbí*. Though I had informed participants that findings would be shared with government at the conclusion of the study, the power that they additionally ascribed to me fueled my recognition that I did, in fact, have some capacity for change. Thus, as described above under tangible benefit, ahead of stage three, I attempted to use that power beyond being a conduit through the fundraising campaign. By doing so, I responded to the challenge of positionality by moving beyond a reflexive acknowledgement of the issues it presents towards an intentional application of a set of principles meant to address them.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has detailed the study's overall approach of epistemological subjectivity and ethnographic methodology. It has also presented an ethics framework for fieldwork that exemplifies a situated, methodical approach to reflexivity which integrates participants' epistemologies – using participants' own meanings and expressions – to respond to positional issues of class, privilege, and power. Applied through the principles of *continuity; adherence to local and national processes; adaptation to local ways of being and doing; and provision of tangible benefit*, the *Qmqlùàbí* moral ethical framework offers a novel, contextually appropriate ethics framework to guide research with economically disadvantaged communities in rural, cultural settings, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In the next chapter, I provide an overview of participants' communities and discuss the methods used to generate data through our interactions.

Chapter 5. Design

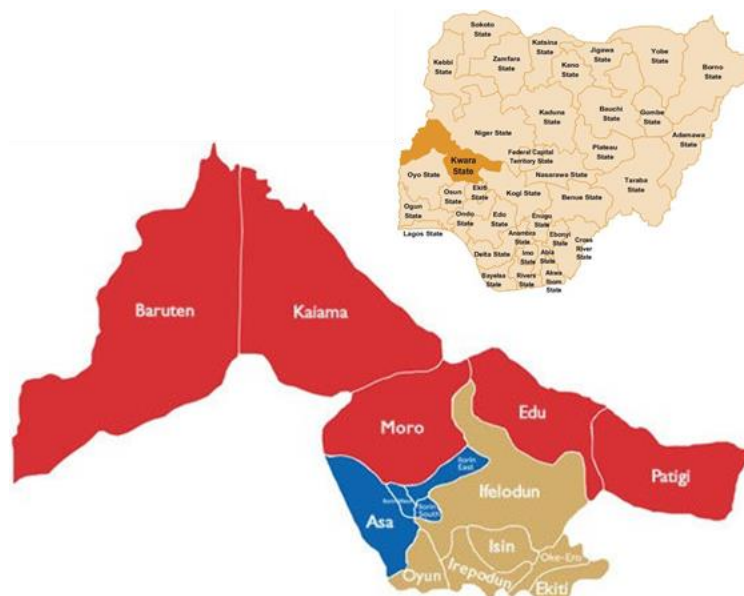
5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the study's philosophical assumptions, ethnographic methodology and unique ethics framework. This chapter discusses the ethnographic methods used to generate data and demonstrates how the moral ethical principle of *adaptation to local ways of being and doing* was necessary to elicit participants' views and experiences within their contexts. First, the chapter begins with a sketch of the two research communities and a discussion of the context-driven decisions around sampling and informed consent. Then, it discusses the planned methods (participant observation and interviews) and how these translated during the researcher-participant encounter. The chapter concludes with an overview of the analytical process and a consideration of the study's trustworthiness.

5.2. The research communities

The two schools and communities (schoolA/schoolB; commA/commB) are located in one of *Kwara's* sixteen LGAs:

Figure 5.1 Kwara LGAs (source: Agba et al., 2018)



Like many others, the LGA was created in 1976 and is divided into three districts, one of which serves as its administrative headquarters. It is considered amongst the most rural in the state with farming (small scale/subsistence) being the predominant occupation (Olawepo, 2010). Women also engage in agriculture through market gardening (small-scale fruit and vegetable production and sales) and agro-processing (e.g., locust beans, shea butter, tofu cakes, etc.) for sale within their communities and in the state capital. The

major commercial and subsistence crops grown in the LGA include yams, cassava, guinea corn and maize although sweet potato, plantain, kolanuts and others are also cultivated. Its inhabitants are predominantly *Yorùbá* but there is also a significant population of *Fulani*, some of whom through generational intermarriage have acculturated to become *Yorùbá*. Most of these inhabitants practice Islam. The LGA's basic schooling system (primary and junior secondary schools [JSSs]) is managed by the local government education agency (LGEA), the local arm of the *Kwara* State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) responsible for the day-to-day management of schools and teachers.

Before describing the two schools and communities, it is important to clarify what this study means by 'community'. A community is a type of group which, as noted in **3.4**, is a *socially constructed category of people with common affiliations or identities* (Stewart, 2005). Such affiliations may be geographic; ethnic and racial; religious; familial (i.e., out of shared family concerns e.g., PTAs); or philanthropic and may not always comprise (more or less) formal decision-making units (Bray, 2003). These affiliations are not mutually exclusive as communities may share more than one (Stewart, 2005). Moreover, it is now recognized that communal identity may transverse geographic boundaries (e.g., Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Stewart, 2005) as people may identify or share affiliations with others in different geographies.

As will be seen, commA and commB are geographically bounded but importantly, are also ethnically, religiously and, in the case of commA, familially affiliated. Communal affiliations in both communities were gleaned from the way participants performed ('spoke' and 'did') community, i.e., their collective intentionality and group agency (**3.4.1**). It wasn't uncommon for participants to use the plural personal 'we' when responding to a question posed to them individually and many in commA repeatedly noted that '*we're all brothers and sisters*'. Likewise, in commB, participants repeatedly used 'we' and '*our people*' to refer to themselves and to respond to questions typically posed individually. Performances of communality in relation to schooling will be further discussed as part of the findings in **8.3**; however, community members attended and contributed financially and otherwise to each other's events and celebrations (called *òdes*) including naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals, among others. Absence was a significant slight, forgiven by an excuse commensurate with the magnitude of the missed occasion. As will be discussed in **5.4**, this performance contributed substantively to the data generated, as it influenced researcher-participant interactions. Notably, given the descriptions provided of the research communities, the distinction made in this thesis between village and community is primarily one of population size (i.e., a village is a very small community).

The evidence of communality does not suggest that in either community, power was shared equitably or that members were homogenous, 'spoke' with a common voice (i.e., had no disagreements or differences) or always had shared views (Kendall et al., 2015; Rose, 2003). Frictions and tensions were observed and

sometimes reported during casual conversations and not everyone felt a part of the community (e.g., Father5commA) while others decried what they saw as the increasing individualism of some community members which negatively affected collective action even towards schooling. Nevertheless, the prevailing sense was that of community. Accordingly, school-community, in this study, is understood as a community with a shared interest in the school, one comprising the socio-cultural, educational (official) and political leadership in the immediate vicinity of the school (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011). The two schools and communities, also referred to as school-communities, of this study are hereby described.

5.2.1. The first community and school

The first community (henceforth commA), is a Muslim settlement. CommA is ‘first’ only because it was visited first during stage one (the scoping and approval trip). It is rural though not remote, given its location along a major interstate road which commuters sometimes take to *Lagos*:

Figure 5.2 Google Earth map of commA (right, schoolA and its JSS labelled in blue)



It is unclear how many live in commA but one participant estimated it was over 500⁵⁸. Partly due to its location along a major road, most of the men earn their livelihoods as ‘transporters’ or drivers of local, intra-state and inter-state commercial and commuter vehicles. Other male occupations include mechanics, bricklayers, *Ààfáàs* (Islamic teachers) and a handful of civil servants such as teachers. Most women earn their livelihoods through small-scale off-farm micro-enterprises or farming and selling vegetables, locust beans, yams, plantains, soya beans, cashew nuts, *garri* (cassava grains), etc. Many also operate tiny shops

⁵⁸ Based on the ballots for the 2019 Federal and state elections which the participant recalled were more than 500 though they included those of two nearby smaller communities. Including those ineligible to vote (i.e., those younger than 18), he thought commA’s population should be close to 800.

in the community, selling over the counter drugs, condiments, food provisions, pure water (bagged filtered water packaged in transparent polythene sachets), drinks, traditional medicine, etc. Some sell cooked food such as rice, beans, spaghetti, cassava *fùfú*, yam flour *fùfú*, guinea corn porridge, soya bean cakes (fried or cooked tofu aka *beske*), etc. and uncooked ingredients such as raw pieces of meat (bought wholesale from a butcher and cut), smoked fish, fresh fish etc. Mornings are particularly abuzz in commA as women sell cooked food to children heading to school. There are two main mosques in commA: one in the centre and the other a few yards away, near the major interstate road. Walking through the community during stage two (fieldwork), I would pass by two hand water pumps in different areas though there were also a few wells and at least one motorized (electric) water source. Women and girls typically fetched water in the mornings to store in large, plastic water drums for later use. Electricity was sporadic early in fieldwork, though ahead of Federal and State elections of February and March 2019, it was less so. **Figure 5.3** illustrates the livelihoods of some selected mothers using photo elicitation (to be discussed in 5.4.2):

Figure 5.3 Top left: Mother2's commercial kitchen where she makes three to four pots of cassava fùfú daily; top right: Mother3's grinding machine operation; bottom left: Mother5's hair braiding operation (fieldwork) and cooked tofu snack business (follow-up); and Mother7's fried tofu snack business.





Fortuitously, my fieldwork coincided with the culmination of a personal project of one of the participants, Father8. Created for “those who are coming behind whose eyes will not be able to see anything,” was a history of commA, culled from the recollections of its oldest surviving members. This oral history is very briefly re-presented here. According to Father8, commA is traceable to a man who, wanting to freely practice his newly acquired Islamic religion, left his original village in neighbouring *Oyo* with his family and some other new converts. They headed Northward on foot through various towns where though they wished to settle, they could not because of religious differences with the existing residents who practiced traditional religion. They continued towards *Ilorin*, having heard that it was hospitable to new converts⁵⁹. In *Ilorin*, they were welcomed and even given land to build their own home (the home remains today). However, being farmers, they sought to return to their occupation and moved southward from *Ilorin* in search of farmland. Where they eventually found the farmland is where they settled and where the original founder passed away and his children grew up, though they still maintained ownership of the house in *Ilorin* (this practice of dual residency: maintaining homes in town alongside rural farming villages or colonies is also prevalent in the second community, and has been documented in other parts of *Yorùbáland* e.g., LeVine et al., 2003). His children and family later moved away from this location towards what is now commA, where one of the children became prominent due to his sagacity and hospitality towards Hausa-Fulani cattle merchants who stopped to rest beside commA as they moved cattle by foot from Northern Nigeria to Lagos to sell. His sagacity was such that whenever an issue arose which required investigation, he was the one consulted, to the extent that the representative of the Emir of *Ilorin* for commA’s district became his trusted friend. The inhabitants of commA include the descendants of the man and his siblings,

⁵⁹ This period of migration was around the 1860s, according to the ‘*tirà*’ (an Arabic text/lesson/note book) of one of Father8’s (great/grand) fathers.

all sons of the man who left his state in pursuit of religious freedom⁶⁰. Although others⁶¹ have moved to commA over time, many of its inhabitants (and most of my participants) are descendants of these siblings and are thus related genealogically. Inhabitants are also related through polygyny, a common cultural and religiously sanctioned practice in the community and among the Muslim residents of predominantly Muslim *Ilorin*. For instance, among commA's selected participants (see **Appendix A**), only one man (a non-descendant) had one wife while all women lived in households with at least two wives. Two women came from households with three and four wives, respectively.

CommA contains two primary schools, one public and one private, both bearing its name. There is also a basic Islamic school located a few yards away from the private – the Islamic school was started first, in 1989, while the private began in 2010. Also located within commA is a combined public junior and senior secondary school (J/SSS) that, like the private primary, serves students from commA and nearby villages. The J/SSS was established in 2003 by commA and is managed by the LGEA, which manages and remunerates staff, and a community-led education committee⁶², which co-manages the school's finances. During stage three (follow-up), a new private school had opened beside the roadside, owned by a cousin of a commA father. The public primary school (henceforth schoolA) which anchors this study only serves children from commA and was started in 1976 when UPE was introduced (see **2.2**). SchoolA was experiencing some challenges during stages one and two. For one, the school's population appeared to be diminishing. No official enrolment data was obtainable for the academic year 2018-2019 and although it was verbally estimated to be above 100, attendance during two weeks of observation in February averaged 60 learners. One day during fieldwork, I counted 50. Moreover, the School Head (or headteacher, henceforth HT) of the initial scoping visit had retired by the beginning of fieldwork (December 2018). His replacement – who arrived in January 2019 – departed some months after March 2019. By the follow-up stage, things appeared to have changed. A new HT had begun, the population was growing – one day, I counted 96 learners – and there were more teachers in the school, including trainee/student teachers, most of whom were from commA.

⁶⁰ This oral *history* is primarily culled from a 'her' who narrated commA's story to her children, one of whom was the main data source. Her story, though remarkable and brave, I do not have permission to share due to its sensitivity.

⁶¹ People from nearby villages, friends of commA inhabitants and even few descendants of the Hausa-Fulani cattle merchants who settled having discovered the village on their cattle transport route between Northern Nigeria and Lagos.

⁶² This is different from the school based management committee (SBMC), a creation of the ESSPIN program mentioned in **1.1**. The education committee receives and manages the income generated by the school i.e., school and exam fees. It has about six members including a Chairman (Father8) and a Treasurer (Father10).

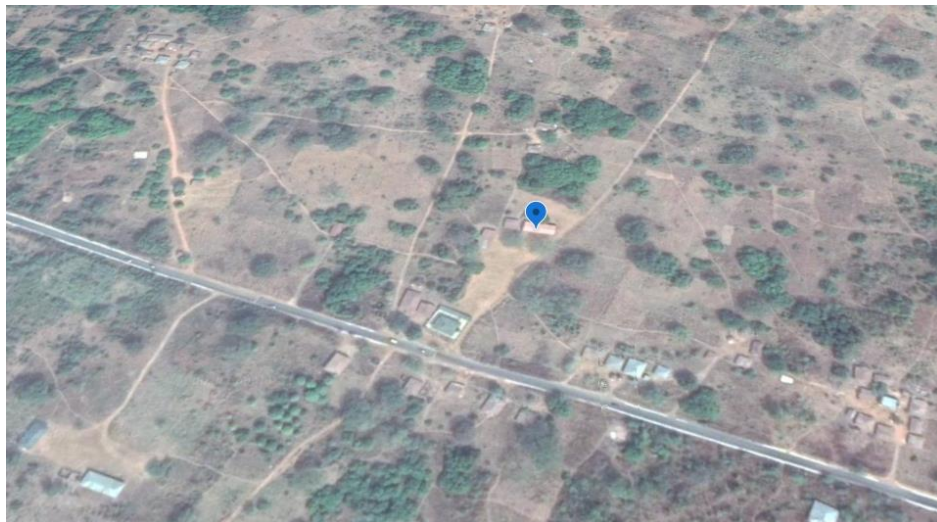
Figure 5.4 SchoolA compound



5.2.2. The second community and school

The second community of this study (henceforth commB), is also a Muslim settlement. Though not remote, it is more rural than commA and while also located alongside an interstate road (which does not lead to *Lagos*), this road is usually less plied⁶³. Unlike commA which is a more visibly bounded, and densely populated community, commB is an umbrella term referring to a community made up of various hamlets of extended families or households, each considered a village and bearing its own village/family name.

Figure 5.5 Google Earth map of some commB villages – schoolB in blue; its J/SSS in the bottom left



⁶³ The road also leads to the Republic of Benin and due to the Federal government's ban on rice importation in 2015, and in August 2019, the closure of land borders, the road was, for some time, used as a rice smuggling route.

As one community member revealed, “it’s not that it’s one village which is called commB. Each person [family] has the name of his/her village...If one doesn't know the name of the village one is going now if s/he says s/he's going to commB, s/he'll get lost.” According to him, commB derives its name from a river where elephants used to gather to drink and where villagers used to go hunt them. The (at least) 85-year old participant (Grandfather4) recounted that the commB has been thus named since he was young noting, “we who were there, that’s how we met it when we were wise (i.e., when we were old enough to discern things).” According to him, elders from surrounding villages decided to create a gathering place for the sale and barter of farm outputs. Over time, this place grew into a space where counsel was given and decisions made on behalf of assembled villages. Like commA, no population data exist for commB but it comprises at least 15 villages of varying sizes, and perhaps up to 20. For instance, there are eight villages in the study and another seven whose names I heard or whose paths I trod. Like commA, commB’s inhabitants are primarily *Yorùbá*, some indigenous while others, like the forefathers of commA, had been given land on which to settle and farm by indigenes. *Fulani* people are also interspersed within and around commB, some having completely acculturated to *Yorùbá* (e.g., Grandfather8) and others who still maintain their culture but preserve necessary socio-economic ties with *Yorùbás*. For example, there are various *Fulani* children at the commB public primary school (schoolB) who speak fluent *Yorùbá* and *Fulani* women occasionally hawk local cheese around the villages. They are especially visible in larger, nearby towns and on market days, pursuing their livelihoods with, and alongside, *Yorùbás*⁶⁴.

All commB villages earn their livelihoods, at least in part, from farming. Many participants are exclusively farmers, except one father who farmed alongside his day job as the deputy-head of the local public transport union, after various decades as a ‘transporter’ like most of the fathers in commA. Like commA, there are a handful of *Ààfáàs* (Islamic teachers), bricklayers and mechanics (primarily for motorcycles – most people do not own cars) and transporters. There are also a few traditional herbalists and spiritualists, performed in conjunction with either Islam (i.e., the *Ààfáàs*) or traditional religion (the deputy-head mentioned earlier also counted himself a traditional herbalist alongside his Muslim faith) or an indiscernible combination of both. A market day operates every five days where farmers from commB and surrounding villages bring their commodities to sell to other villages, communities, nearby towns, *Ilorin* and as far as *Lagos*. Notably, commA also has a market day on Tuesdays held in a market area outside the community, but it is not well known and functions like any other market (i.e., it functions on other days and is only slightly bigger on Tuesday). At the commB market day, men generally congregate around heaps of yam, while women stand or sit beside sacks and buckets of cassava or yam flour (peeled, dried, ground),

⁶⁴ Relations between *Yorùbás* and *Fulanis* are not always peaceful and are emblematic of the broader herdsmen/farmer clashes which have troubled Nigeria, particularly in recent years (see International Crisis Group [ICG], 2017). SchoolB’s head, for example, recounted deadly clashes in 2013 which saw many in commB flee their homes. The epicentre of the conflict was nearby town in which the school head resides, a short drive to commB.

guinea corn, maize, sweet potato, cashew nuts (seasonal), beans, soya beans, etc., with few involved in the yam trade. Women also sell condiments and ingredients including locust beans, vegetables, cooking potash, fruits in season, traditional medicine, etc. Children also participate in market days either by helping parents/guardians sell or watch over products for sale and/or by selling their own products. In addition to farming, and like commA, within commB, some women sell cooked food, bread, fried or cooked tofu (*beske*) and food provisions.

Figure 5.6 CommB market day commodities. Left: tubers of yams; right: sacks of cassava, yam flour, etc.



Figure 5.7 illustrates – using photo elicitation – the livelihoods of some selected fathers:

Figure 5.7 Top left: one of Father2's yam farms located behind his house; top right: Father5's livestock for sale and occasional consumption; bottom left: Father6's cassava and yam farm; and bottom right: Grandfather8's fermenting cassava in clay and plastic barrels.



There are a few mosques in commB, though the main one is located at the mouth of the road, by the entrance to schoolB (see above map of commB, **Figure 5.5**, the green and white building by the road entrance to schoolB). Only a few villages have water so some villagers walk miles to fetch it for storage in large, plastic water drums. Like commA, electricity exists but its supply is sporadic though, also like commA, this improves significantly during local, State and Federal elections when politicians are vying for rural electoral support. The majority of commB's selected participants also reside in polygynous households albeit with no more than two wives (see **Appendix A**) and only two are monogamous. Of the polygynous,

two have one wife residing in the capital city with her children (i.e., the husband resides in commB with the second wife and occasionally visits the first).

CommB contains only one public primary school (schoolB) and one public J/SSS across the road (see bottom left corner of the map of commB, **Figure 5.5**). Like schoolA, schoolB was started in 1976 during UPE while the J/SSS began more recently in 2013. Like schoolA J/SSS, schoolB J/SSS is overseen by an education committee comprised of commB members and it shares ownership with the LGEA which hires, (re)deploys and pays school staff. Both the primary and J/SSS serve the various villages of commB. According to the schoolB HT, the 2018-2019 enrolment was 196 learners (92M, 104F); however, average attendance during the nearly three weeks of observation revealed approximately 105 learners in attendance. The lowest attendance observed, 78 learners, occurred on a Friday, the Muslim weekly day of prayer. According to the schoolB head, children's market day absenteeism had markedly improved as she had firmly told parents that the school would not accept it.

Figure 5.8 SchoolB compound



5.3. Participant selection

The parents selected for this study were those believed to hold relevant knowledge and experience about their children's schooling and with whom I could generate data to answer the study's research questions. Such knowledge and experience underpin an information-richness which is the hallmark of purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015), the technique adopted for this study. Palinkas et al. (2015) also include availability, interest, and willingness to participate, and ability to reflect upon experiences and comprehensibly express views. They identify a sub-type, criterion purposive sampling, which incorporates specific criteria that purposively sampled participants should meet to further deepen their information-

richness. By including the simple criteria of a small, rural community with no more than a primary and J/SSS, the study ensured that communities not only still retained a sense of ‘community’, as defined earlier, but that the presence of the schools within communities’ geographic boundaries necessitated a relationship between school and community. As noted in **1.2**, the selection of two school-communities occurred as a result of the stage one suspicion of differences in the dynamics of the two visited schools which suggested each school-community might provide varying responses to the research questions. Stage one, therefore, served a practical, ethical *and* methodological aim as it contributed to the study’s methodological decisions. As noted in **1.2**, selecting two school-communities, moreover, created a contingency in case that it was not possible to conduct research in one.

Although parents of primary school children were the focal participants of this study, schools served as appropriate entry points to facilitate access, given their knowledge of communities/families; and to reduce the perception that whoever facilitated my entry had something to gain, a perception which would likely have been high had I been introduced by a community member. While being introduced by schools meant I was initially associated with schools, my continuous explanation of the study and the considerable time spent in the communities gradually eroded this association. Thus, schools served as gate keepers – important participants who ease access to a group or setting (O’Reilly, 2012) – to parents. Specifically, HTs helped purposively sample a quota of a minimum of six parents (Robinson, 2014), either a mother or father within a household who has children in their schools – preferably in the upper levels. The figure derives from a data generation plan developed after the initial scoping visit based on available resources and time, and multiple visits. These figures also align with recent recommendations of between six and 12 qualitative interviews per sub-population of interest in thematic analysis (Namey, 2017).

On my first day of fieldwork, after verbally re-presenting the study aims to schoolA’s HT as he read the information and consent form and enlisting his help to select parents using the above criteria, he thought for a few moments and wrote eight names (three fathers, five mothers) on the piece of paper I had torn out of my notebook. These were those who, in his view, could respond without fear of speaking and would not ask, “who are you and why have you come to speak with us”?⁶⁵ Having little choice but to trust his judgement – after all, I knew nothing about these communities – I pressed him to include some contingencies and three additional names followed: one father and two mothers.

Names in hand (and internally shaking with fear as I had not mentally prepared to go into commA on my first day), I was escorted into commA with schoolA’s only local teacher at the time for an introduction to

⁶⁵ All parents he selected did ask this in one shape or form. However, the HT’s concern about non-responsiveness is valid, given its challenges to research credibility (Shenton, 2004).

the suggested parents. I found none of the fathers but found all the mothers and added to the list an older woman who self-volunteered out of curiosity. Beyond an introduction, I did not get to speak with one of the fathers as he was never home when I visited; however, I added another (Father8) who, though he had no child in schoolA, was a key member of commA⁶⁶. Two other parents were later added: another mother, and the Chairman of schoolA's PTA. In total, ten parents (three fathers, six mothers and one grandmother) formed the 'core' list of those visited repeatedly. Though purposive, the sample was geographically dispersed as I later experienced from walking from one end of commA to another in search of parents, under the intense African sun. While I did not ask parents' age because 1) it was not critical for this study; and 2) it is a violation of *ìtẹ́rìbà* (respect) to ask an elder person for his/her age, parents were older parents (the self-volunteering participant was a grandmother), the youngest likely to be at least in their mid-forties. Most parents had little or no schooling, except two mothers who had completed P6⁶⁷ and JSS3, and two fathers who had certified as teachers through the post-colonial teacher training system (four years of teachers' college post-primary) called Grade 2⁶⁸.

The process was similar in schoolB. The HT's initial list had nine parents: six fathers and three mothers, four from two villages. To ensure greater geographical diversity, we revised the list, removing one father and replacing a mother from whose village a father had already been selected. The eventual 'core' list was eight parents: five fathers and three mothers. In practice, I sometimes spoke with the mother if the father was away and vice versa and additionally interacted engaged with a grandfather. Four additional [grand]parents were added this way. It was later evident that the HT had used her own criterion of *accessibility* (I had informed her I would be visiting families on foot) as most of the households were those nearest schoolA. This later became useful as I sometimes had to return to a village multiple times to check on a parent (except one, all the homes visible in **Figure 5.5**, as well as one out of sight on the bottom right, were those to which I walked). Like commA, commB had grandparents in its sample (two grandmothers, one of whom handed me over to the grandfather, and another grandfather), and there were more grandparents in the commB sample. Perhaps as a result, commB parents were generally older than commA parents. The HT had also included some parents who were or had been part of the PTA or SBMC leadership, though, unlike Essuman & Akyeampong (2011)'s study where PTA or SMC parents were those with schooling experience, most commB parents had no schooling, except Grandfather8 who had completed *Yorùbá* adult school and Father5 who had completed primary.

⁶⁶ It was later discovered that three commA parents did not have children in schoolA: two had learners in J/SSS in a neighbouring community while the grandmother had two grandchildren in a private primary school outside commA. However, towards the end of fieldwork, the grandchildren were transferred to schoolA.

⁶⁷ In rural communities such as commA/commB, completing P6 is essentially the same as not having gone to school as many graduate without acquiring basic numeracy or literacy skills such as writing their own names.

⁶⁸ From 1998 onwards, teachers were required to have completed secondary schooling and three years of teacher training at a certified college of education (CoE) towards a National Certificate of Education (NCE).

Children were included in this study to “give voice to their own [schooling] experiences and understanding of their world” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). 15 children (seven in schoolA; and eight in schoolB) of selected parents and who were between primary 4 (P4) and P6 in either school (and in two cases in commA, in JSS1) were selected for casual chats with age-appropriate questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Conversations occurred under the supervision of parents or teachers (where it happened in schools as it did during the follow-up stage). P4 learners⁶⁹ were expected to be at least nine years old and thus expected to be able to respond to simple questions about their school-related activities (a nine-year-old is considered *wise* among the *Yorùbás*, that is, s/he can speak intelligibly and reason between simple notions of good and bad). This expectation largely held though some children were shy⁷⁰. Given this study’s focus on parents, children’s voices generally served a triangulatory role, helping identifying confirmations and contradictions.

Teachers were also selected for this study, albeit indirectly and schools provided access to them. All HTs and class teachers of children of selected parents were interviewed, as well as KC2 who had knowledge of both communities. During fieldwork, 17 teachers (12 schoolA and five schoolB) participated in interviews. By the follow-up visit, some teachers had been transferred, and thus only ten participated (five from each school), four of whom had been interviewed during fieldwork.

Appendix A contains the list of selected participants along with demographic information such as level of schooling, number of children, livelihood, number of wives, spousal livelihood, etc. Each participant is uniquely identified by a combination of parent type, number (order of household interaction), and community, e.g., Mother6commA.

Informed consent

After schoolA’s HT wrote down his list of suggested parents, I informed him I would need to obtain their consent through the questions included on the last page of the information and consent form (see **Appendix D**). He looked at me and mused aloud along the lines of, ‘You’re *Yorùbá*, you have to act like a *Yorùbá*. Just explain to them what you’re doing and they’ll agree. Don’t confuse or scare them with all these forms!’ His reaction was no surprise: written/printed forms are often viewed with suspicion in low or no literacy contexts where signatures or thumb-prints are required for legal documents [and election

⁶⁹ I use ‘learner’ in this thesis to refer to pupils or students or when discussing the data (I use students where this term is used in the literature), to underscore that the school, like other spaces, is a place for learning.

⁷⁰ 13-year-old Girlchild6, in P4, stopped speaking to me late during fieldwork after her mother’s co-wife thought I was a child kidnapper the evening of her after school observation (her and other children had insisted on walking me to the roadside and the co-wife, upon seeing us and having not previously met me, began to scream). The situation was resolved immediately as I walked back to the house to present myself to the co-wife and was ‘defended’ by the other women who knew me. But Girlchild6 never spoke to me again, even in stage 3.

ballot papers] and where written/printed or thumb-printed documents leave behind a paper trail which may later be used against persons (Bell & Kothiyal, 2018; Shamim & Qureshi, 2013). Furthermore, fieldwork began in November 2018, three months before Nigeria's general and state elections of February and March 2019, during a period of heightened tensions and palpable mistrust, especially of outsiders.

As shown in the list of participants, apart from two certified teachers and a JSS3 school leaver, no other parent had gone to school. Reading, writing, and signing dense, four-page forms written in English or even *Yorùbá* was therefore out of reach for most parents. McDermott et al. (2019) note that informed consent, though non-negotiable, should be flexible and ethical. In addition to fueling suspicion, insisting on signed consent forms from parents would have been rigid and unethical as it would have explicitly demonstrated my educational privilege, widening our educational power divide. When I proceeded into commA with the list of parents' names and approached the first few with my English information and consent form⁷¹, I could sense visible discomfort. I quickly pivoted, seeking instead oral consent – already provided for in the institutional ethics approval process – after explaining the research and its rationale in simple, straightforward terms so as not to induce anxiety (Patton, 2015) or worse yet, 'lose them' (Molyneux et al., 2004, p. 2553). I then wrote down the date the consent was given on the piece of paper with parents' names. I did the same for those who were then unavailable and later gave consent. Moreover, most interactions were recorded (using a dictaphone) and prior to recording, I again sought and obtained oral consent to do so. Unlike other studies in non-Euro-American, Muslim contexts (e.g., Shamim & Qureshi, 2013), the women in this study freely gave their consent during our initial meeting.

All parents agreed to be recorded as did all teachers except one (they did not agree for me to write notes during our interaction and suggested that we could redo the interview once they knew the type of questions I wanted to ask – we never did). I did, however, obtain signed consent from teachers – they were more familiar with such official requirements and could read the forms – and gave each a photocopy of their signed information and consent form. Only one parent (Father5commA) requested a copy of the informed consent form as physical proof of his participation in the study. Parental consent was obtained to speak with children, often right beside parents at home (during follow-up, I also spoke with children whose parents had consented at school, within supervisory sight of teachers). I only spoke with children who assented and whose parents had consented (NHREC, 2016).

Notably, during my initial meeting, I opted for a simpler approach to consent because 1) it was an introductory meeting (i.e., no data were generated); and 2) I knew I would revisit the same participants multiple times and therefore decided not to bombard them with information they were little likely to fully

⁷¹ Most parents could not read in either English or *Yorùbá* making translated forms similarly impractical.

understand at this first meeting. An initial meeting also gave parents time to further reflect on whether they still wanted to participate before our subsequent interactions the following week. Consent is continuous (Helgesson & Eriksson, 2011) and to ensure continuity of informed consent, I asked participants if they had questions for me at the end of *every* interaction. Most participants took this up and asked me a question at least once. Initially, questions were about the study which, once exhausted, gave way to questions about me and life in the UK. Doing this also ensured participants' *continued* participation was highly informed, understood, and voluntary.

5.4. Methods

As noted earlier, ethnography employs a plurality of methods, the main ones being participant observation and interviews. This section highlights the application of the study's main data generation methods: participant observation, interviews (semi-structured, group, photo elicitation and go-alongs).

5.4.1. Participant observation

In ethnographic research, learning about peoples' lives involves not only asking them about their lives, but also "observing them, participating in their lives, and asking questions that relate to the daily life experience as we have seen and experienced it" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 86). The combination of observing and participating is *participant observation*, the process of learning about people through "exposure to or involvement in the[ir] day-to-day or routine activities...[with]in the research setting" (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013, p. 83). The first part, participation, involves being present and interacting with participants in their settings while an activity or event occurs (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). The second, observation, involves standing back, taking notice, and making notes (O'Reilly, 2012). Participant observation, then, requires a careful balance between being involved and subjective on one hand, and being distant and objective on the other (O'Reilly, 2012), even if this objectivity is subject to the researcher's 'interpretive frames' (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013, p. 88). Such involvement – where feasible – enables meaningful interaction with those being observed; deepening the researcher's interpretive frame or ability to make sense of participants' lives (Delamont, 2008).

During fieldwork, I observed and participated in activities occurring around me. For instance, chatting and spending time with parents and children before or after an interview; with teachers while we sat under the gathering tree⁷², and hitchhiking or hopping on and off cars; and with families while peeling cassava to be

⁷² The gathering tree is the shaded area under a big tree where people congregate to sit, rest, eat, gossip, etc. The one at schoolA was frequently used but the one at schoolB, less so. An important one was located along the route to schoolB where

processed ahead of market day (commB) or to make *fùfù* (commA). Capturing data (e.g., note-taking) is a critical element of participant observation (O'Reilly, 2012) and I used my mobile phone⁷³ to type notes in English while holding conversations in *Yorùbá*. The following is an extract from fieldnotes made in commA as I observed while waiting for Mother2. They were initially typed on my phone and as the day progressed, extended with time stamps inserted where possible. They were later transferred to a Word document and have been slightly 'cleaned' for the purposes of this illustration.

Figure 5.9 Extract from fieldnotes, commA, 2019/02/13

9.42 a.m.

One of Mother1's neighbors comes across Mother2's place with a long stick and a bucket... she's on her way to fetch koro. MotherX (teacher at J/SSS) walks by on her way to school, and we greet.

SchoolA's head boy in primary six comes by (I think Mother2's 2nd eldest girl who is operating the grinding machine screamed at him to come). He's not wearing his school uniform and does not look like he'll go to school today. He stands by the grinding machine that the girl is operating and watches as she works.

9.44 a.m.

The grinding machine stops...whew! My head was about to explode for the noise (it has been operating non-stop since I arrived at Mother2's house ten minutes ago). The head boy walks off with a bucket on his head of something that has already been ground (usually mixtures of bell peppers, tomatoes, onions or beans or maize, etc.).

9.47 a.m.

The 2nd eldest girl goes off inside the home and comes back outside within a minute.

9.48 a.m.

Someone yells from a house nearby, "You're home"? The 2nd eldest girl replies, "Ah, I'm not going to school!"

I ask, where did your Mom go? She tells me her mother went to the farm. I then ask, "But she won't be long?" She replies, "No, she'll return soon. Do you want to wait for her?" I respond, "Yes, I can wait for her. I'm still in the village."

While peeling cassava with families, I sometimes interviewed parents; or simply listened, laughed, or nodded along with the conversation. Because both hands would usually be occupied as we peeled (one holding the cassava and the other, a knife), I recorded specific interviews and made mental notes of relevant elements in more general conversations to later type on my phone. Participating as I did, for example in helping peel cassava, was also intrinsic to *adaptation to local ways of being and doing* within the *Ọmọlúàbí* moral ethical framework. An *Ọmọlúàbí* with *ìwà rere* (*good character*) who sees others doing

teachers gathered in the morning to see which staff member was driving to school (and with whom they could hitch or pay along). The principal hitchhiking junction for schoolB and farther schools was a 10-minute drive from this tree.

⁷³ This was quicker and slightly more discreet. The phone I initially used was stolen in a public taxi by professional thieves partway through fieldwork but no participant data was lost because I transferred data daily unto my laptop. However, some accrued reflection notes which I had yet to transfer were. I bought a cheap tablet after the theft and continued to use it to take notes due to quickness though being a larger device, it was less discreet. Against future risk, I maintained the practice of daily data transfer.

work (e.g., chores) nearby is expected to aid to the extent possible. This was repeatedly demonstrated in both communities where neighbours (and even teachers) joined other families' cassava peeling efforts. Although I sought a careful balance between *participating* and *observing* and usually did both in practice, sometimes, I specifically sought to observe. For instance, during fieldwork, there was a four-week after-school observation period where, every day, I followed a child home (10 in total) primarily to observe what they did and speak with him/her about it. This period occurred partway during fieldwork when parents already knew me and were used to my presence, inquiries, and notetaking either in my notebook or phone. I also used a printed observation schedule on which I made brief notes while still in the community and detailed them later using phone notes and recollection.

At other times, I was specifically asked to participate. Often, schoolB's HT would request I teach older children or sit with younger ones whose teachers were absent. As I did not have the scheme of work, the 'teaching' primarily consisted of reviewing and elaborating upon whatever was previously written on the board by the absent teacher. While the children worked on whatever I had assigned, I wrote notes either in my notebook or phone. On such days, I focused on generating school level data including observations and teacher interview and sometimes used morning breaks to go visit a parent who lived near the school.

Schensul and LeCompte (2013) suggest participant observation exists on a continuum between no to full participation, where active participation falls somewhere in between, and full participation is akin to living amongst participants. I chose not to live amongst participants' because I did not want to lose my perspective as a researcher (Delamont, 2016) and because I did not have an a priori relationship with them which would have facilitated my ability to do so. As there were two communities, it would also not have been possible to live in both, making a commute to one inevitable. Moreover, living in the state capital had two advantages. One, it was within manageable daily commute of both communities⁷⁴ and living there meant increased access to water and electricity, the latter facilitating my ability to, among others, transfer data daily to my laptop. Two, it supported my emotional wellbeing (Naveed et al., 2017): the physical distance enabled me to step away from some difficult moments to reflect and mentally regroup before returning to communities. To further support my wellbeing and to give communities 'rest', I did not conduct fieldwork during weekends, holidays or elections-induced school closures.

As already mentioned, *participating* enables meaningful interaction with participants (Delamont, 2008) and though this interaction acknowledges the researcher's role in participants' lives (O'Reilly, 2012), its meaningfulness helps build trust and the relationship between participants and the researcher. The more I spent time with participants and conversed about issues unrelated to the study, the more participants

⁷⁴ CommB was farther and on particularly difficult hitchhike mornings, the typical hour-long commute took more than two.

became comfortable with me. The more comfortable they became, the more they acted as their true selves. The more they acted as their true selves, the more freely they shared what they *really* thought (Trimble & Mohatt, 2006) both within and outside the confines of the interview, minimizing data bias and maximizing credibility i.e., accuracy of findings (Lincoln et al., 2011, 2017) for a truer representation of participants' realities.

Notably, note-taking doesn't only occur during participant observation. As alluded to, I took handwritten notes in my notebook during interviews to provide a context for the interaction. Generally, throughout the day, I took notes as I walked around and observed or reflected on earlier occurrences. Delamont (2016) identifies reflexive notes as an important type of ethnographic writing ("reflexive diaries") which she recommends be kept separate from fieldnotes (p. 39). Fieldwork practicalities meant this was not always feasible. Therefore, I included reflexive notes among my daily mobile phone fieldnotes while in schools and communities. In the evenings, I made other reflexive notes in a separate notebook which also included emergent analytical ideas (Delamont, 2016). The following is an example of reflexive notes made in the early days of fieldwork in commB⁷⁵:

Figure 5.10 Extract from fieldnotes, commB, 2018/12/05

It's 10.18 a.m. I just came from X village, Grandmother1commB. Quite a bit deflated. She's tough and reluctant so I wonder to what extent I should continue to push. She's experienced people who came, asked questions, and did nothing for them, despite all their needs in the community: water, grinder, jobs, ... She used the opportunity to express her annoyance, directing it at me without directing it at me at the same time. Sigh. It's not going to be easy. But this is only our first exchange, so all hope is not lost.

Doing research in challenging places. How do you come to talk to people about an interest of yours which does not align with their immediate needs? How do you justify it and is it ethical?

10.29 a.m. I need a mental regroup.

Next, I discuss how I employed interviews in this study.

5.4.2. Interviews

Qualitative interviews are (gently) guided discussions with a 'conversational partner', a person respected and trusted as a reliable source of information on the topic of interest (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 7). They range on a continuum from no structure at all to completely structured, where the greater the structure,

⁷⁵ Such "humiliating exposures" in the early days of fieldwork may be fieldwork's most informative part (Delamont, 2016, p. 84). Indeed, Grandmother1commB's exposure of the extractiveness of my research led to questions and reflections about ethics and ultimately, my decision to try to counter this extractiveness, as discussed in the previous chapter.

the more predetermined the set of questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011). However, even with the most rigid list of questions, it is possible to be flexible, that is, to modify questions according to the direction of the conversation. For Rubin & Rubin (2012), such a *responsive interviewing* approach enables adjustment to the personalities of the conversational partners. In naturalistic inquiries including ethnographic research, interviews tend to be less structured – i.e., responsive – to enable interviewees to reflect, explore their own perspectives and sometimes, veer off-topic (O'Reilly, 2012).

In addition to having varying levels of structure, qualitative ethnographic interviews may occur with groups spontaneously or may be planned (with an existing group) or focused (with a group whose members may or not be familiar) (O'Reilly, 2012). Increasingly, visual images, particularly those produced by participants, are being used as stimulants for interviews (Prosser, 2013) to support the meanings participants make of their worlds (O'Reilly, 2012). Given this study's constructivist epistemology, I use the term 'interaction' to refer to the outcome of the interview process between participants and me which occurs within the broader community setting, the specific interview and the 'interactional encounter' (De Fina & Perrino, 2011)⁷⁶. The following describes the types of interviews used in this study.

Communal and individual interactions

During fieldwork and follow-up, I conducted individual and *communal* partially structured interviews with parents in *Yorùbá*⁷⁷ lasting anywhere between 5 and 90 minutes, with an average of 23 minutes. Only with a few parents in both communities did the intention to conduct individual interviews materialize. Often, what transpired were *communal* interactions where anyone nearby, passing by or in the vicinity (and within earshot) of me and the intended interviewee interjected, contributed or even (momentarily) hijacked the interaction⁷⁸. These included passersby; a neighbour or co-wife; a child or a teenager; or the entire family including wives, husbands, children, stepsiblings, etc. Sometimes, a child or teen answered for a parent and other times, the parent solicited the child for a response where they felt the child was better placed to respond. Often, nuclear or extended family members sat with us, listening, contributing or correcting as deemed necessary. As interviews most often occurred by the entrance of participants' homes, visible to anyone in sight or passing by, communal interactions became a common interview outcome. Though I initially resisted them, – they were the exact opposite of what I thought of as 'successful' interviews – I eventually embraced them as demonstrations of social selfhoods which contested "White, Western assumptions about...personhood and agency" dominant in interview-driven research oriented towards the

⁷⁶ I use 'interview' when referring to 1) literature; and 2) the intention (rather than the outcome) of the interaction.

⁷⁷ Only the two teacher-trained parents, spoke and understood English, and even with these, the breadth of their responses would have been significantly curtailed had we attempted to speak English.

⁷⁸ See Patton (2015)'s examples of experiences in West and East Africa where other village members consistently showed up for what were planned (by the researcher) as individual interviews.

“modern [individuated] subject” (Alldred & Gillies, 2012, p. 148, 149; Viruru & Cannella, 2006). Not only was the ensuing data richer, the process used to generate it was better methodologically *and* epistemically situated within participants’ ways of being.

Communal interactions occurred more frequently in commA which had a greater density and people habitually hopped from one home to another to ask for something or someone. The below excerpt from my second interaction with Mother1, the intended interviewee, illustrates:

B: Uhhnn...do you now have something that you don’t like about schoolA or something that, if you could make a difference about it, you would do it, about the school?

Mother1: Like maybe what they’re doing at school?

B: Uhhnn...maybe about the school itself?

Mother1: Ah.... There’s nothing we don’t like there, there’s nothing we don’t like about that school because they’re doing well, we don’t...we don’t see any of their mistakes.

[Father6wife]: what if they (i.e., B) have some help they want to do for you? Why don’t you say that one?

Mother1: At the school? Her [B]?

[Father6wife]: Uhhn...do they have water at school? Do they have water there?

Mother1: Where, at their primary school? They don’t have water...is...she didn’t say what she can do for you, it’s what we can do she’s asking!

[Father6wife]: If she can provide the help / assistance is what I’m saying

[Mother9]: There should be able to be water at that school. If they’re doing the ‘capacity’, there should be able to be water at that school...uhn uhhh, all of it will now...

[A mini chat ensues between the women. Father6wife, responding to Mother9’s last comment asks if there’s electricity there [at schoolA]. Mother1 and another woman say there isn’t. Mother9 as she walks into the house says, “isn’t it the primary...where there’s no toilet?!” Father6wife says, “ah, it doesn’t mean (i.e., matter)!” Mother9 says, “ah, it means o! isn’t it the primary school?!”]

[Father6wife]: All the grounds in their classrooms that’s all dug up [with ‘potholes’], if they can help you level it, it’s all part of it...[to B] or isn’t it part of what you’re asking?

[Mother9 responds to Father6wife from inside the hallway]: That of water, we have heard, that of water, (i.e., the lack of water is not unheard of, unlike that of potholes) ehnn ehnn!

B: it’s part of it...

[Father6wife]: Ehnn ehnn!

[Mother9, now returned to the entrance]: They can help them do their school, their school has repairs [to be done]...that school has repairs... they should be able to do the school...that they repair it so that it’s so that it is ‘normal’...

[Father6wife]: And they can build more [classrooms], all that cement ground which has holes...they can help them...

[Another woman2]: Ehnn, it keeps digging, it keeps digging...all that is important...

...

(Mother1 2018/12/17)

Similarly, in commB, it was not uncommon for brothers, siblings, wives, or neighbours to participate, sometimes at the beckoning of the intended interviewee. For instance, when I arrived at the village of Father6 for our first interview, he had just returned from the farm and was seated beside two fellow male villagers who also appeared to have returned from the farm. After I greeted and told him I wanted to ask him a few questions, he gestured to the two men to join us⁷⁹ and they subsequently interjected whenever they had something to add. Pivoting to accept and embrace communal interactions was, in effect, a form of responsive interviewing, one which went beyond responsiveness to the structure of the interview alone. Like *participating*, doing so *adapted to local ways of being and doing* which, in these instances, were evident in local norms of interaction (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) underpinned by collectivist ways of knowing (Viruru & Cannella, 2006).

The individual interview was not only challenging because of its individuated subject normativity, for some participants, it also altered the dynamic of our conversational partnership. Although participants had no prior experience with qualitative research, their previous experiences with external visitors meant they were not strangers to being questioned about their lives and were thus familiar with the purpose-driven (Viruru & Cannella, 2006) question & answer format of the interview. And while, over time, most participants came to relax and spoke *naturalistically* even within this format and in plain view of my audio recorder, for a few commA and one schoolB teacher, the format proved too artificial to translate into a meaningful conversational partnership in those moments. Unlike the jovial, boisterous, opinionated selves evidenced in countless hours spent together, during the interview, they provided succinct, sometimes closed-ended responses; spoke gently (nearly to a whisper); held long, sometimes awkward silences; and usually never had any question to ask me when prompted. My gentle probing, conscious of their discomfort, availed little. These interactional challenges (Roulston, 2014) confounded my notion of good research practice and exposed my own expectations (Alldred & Gillies, 2012). Although things improved slightly over the period of fieldwork – i.e., the women spoke a few minutes longer –, these participants never fully ‘conformed’ to my expectations of relaxation and naturalism during interviews. While I persisted with interviews and squeezed out whatever few minutes I could, I learned to supplement these

⁷⁹ The *Yorùbás* consider it prudent to have witnesses in conversations, particularly those with ‘strangers’.

interactions (Roulston, 2014) with the extensive moments spent with participants to observe and where opportuned, subtly pose a relevant question.

In addition to the 22 core parents, individual/communal interactions during fieldwork and follow-up included more than 100 additional communal contributors (see **Appendix B** for an approximated list of contributors to and duration of interactions with participants⁸⁰). Due to the continuous approach to data generation, I only asked a few questions during each interaction after which I engaged in casual, ongoing conversations and noted observations. I did not schedule visits in advance because I wanted to observe participants in their naturalistic settings as much as possible⁸¹; however, participants were informed after each visit the day of my next visit, which was usually the same time the following week. With some commB parents, I went to their farms to speak with them (Kusenbach, 2003) while in commA, I sat with women while they made cassava *fùfù* or tofu cakes for sale. Planned group sessions occurred only in commB during fieldwork due to two parents' meetings: a general one for all parents, and a specific one for parents of P6 learners graduating at the end of the academic year. Because I had encouraged the HT to schedule the meetings while I was still around, their content was driven by the HT's agenda and whatever parents additionally raised. Moreover, there was a spontaneous group session during the follow-up stage with parents, teachers and officials on my last day, instigated by the installation of the borehole. Given the departure of the former schoolA HT, the new HT who arrived at the beginning of fieldwork was, until my departure, waiting to be introduced to key community members and no parents' meeting could be planned until afterwards, according to local access processes. During the follow-up stage, the arrival of yet another HT (who needed to meet community members), and the time constraints of the follow-up period, meant there was not enough time to plan and hold a parents' meeting.

With children, I carried out casual age-appropriate interactions in *Yorùbá* ranging between five and 20minutes during fieldwork and follow-up. Although I selected individual children to interview, parents, siblings, and friends who sat beside us interjected as compelled. During follow-up, with the exception of one planned group with three girls (two children of selected parents and their step-sister), interactions were with children individually because they occurred in school where I was able to pull them off to the side in plain sight of their teachers. Moreover, by then, the children had all progressed to the next academic level, some to JSS.

⁸⁰ For simplicity, this table only includes those who verbally contributed to recorded interactions. Those who were present but did not specifically contribute to the interactions have been included, where relevant, in field notes.

⁸¹ Scheduling in advance would also have required calling participants to confirm. This would have been impractical, given the sporadic electricity in both communities which made it difficult to charge phones regularly. Moreover, as I experienced, mobile network connections were poor in commA and abysmal in commB. Also, participants went about their own lives despite advanced scheduling. Once, Father6commA and I, at his suggestion, pre-planned a meeting for the following week. When I arrived excitedly and optimistically on the scheduled day, he was nowhere to be found.

To minimize learning disruption, teacher interviews occurred during morning breaks, usually between 10 a.m. and 10.45 a.m.; thus, it was only possible to interview one teacher per day. The exception was schoolB's HT with whom I usually interacted in the mornings before heading into commB. Because some teachers, particularly in schoolA, initially viewed me with suspicion – during our fieldwork interaction, a schoolA teacher said she thought I was a *detective* – the gathering tree and hitchhike junction conversations became an indispensable complement to schoolA interviews. My interactions with schoolB teachers fared better because of the visible, cordial relationship between the HT and me which remained constant throughout all the stages of the study. During the follow-up stage, due to time constraints and fieldwork observations that teachers fed off each other in groups, I held planned group sessions with teachers in each school who were present on the day of the interaction. Although all teachers spoke and understood English to varying degrees, our interactions were conducted entirely in *Yorùbá* to increase understanding during our conversational partnership; enrich the breadth of responses; and deepen overall trust. **Appendix E** and **Appendix F** contain examples of questions asked of parents and teachers, respectively, during the fieldwork and follow-up. Children's questions included their views on school, teachers, favourite subjects, friends, aspirations, and school-based activities; and their activities (before school, after school and weekends) and schedules.

Photo elicitation interviews

Photo-elicitation interviews, or PEIs, are interviews carried out with the aid of photographs or other visual aids to elicit information (Harper, 2002). In open, participant-driven PEIs, participants take or provide photo(s) relevant to the research interest (Bates et al., 2017). Scholars suggest such participatory PEIs upturns the researcher-participant power dynamic by empowering participants to define what is important to them (Copes et al., 2018; Howes & Miles, 2015). I attempted to use open, participant-driven PEIs through photovoice – providing participants with cameras to take their own photographs (Prosser, 2013) – to add depth to parents' perspectives around schooling. The attempt faced a few challenges.

First, although contacts whom I had asked prior to fieldwork about the possibility of developing films from disposable cameras in Nigeria had assured me of its possibility, upon arrival, I discovered it was not possible. I scoured *Ilorin*, asked friends in *Abuja* and during the Christmas holidays, travelled to *Lagos*, the country's biggest city, all to no avail. It was upon my return from one such search activity, when I entered a public taxi, that thieves in the taxi stole my phone. Despite my frustration, I remained committed to the technique because I felt it could still add depth to participants' perspectives. Therefore, I purchased a phablet (phone-tablet) to give to participants during each interaction to take and explain photos in real time. Second, although my explanation of PEIs was consistent, parents' understandings of it varied. Only Father5commA (one of those with a teaching certificate) appeared to understand and was able to take the photos on his own, i.e., he used the phablet himself after I showed him how to use it. On my attempt with

Grandmother4commA, I stretched the phablet towards her after concluding my explanation and showing her how to use it to take her own photos. She immediately folded her arms and lunged backwards, vigorously shaking her head 'no' while telling me to ask a teenage girl who was washing dishes beside us to take it. With other parents, upon seeing their confused looks after my explanation, I buttressed it by verbally illustrating what Father5commA had photographed. They subsequently told me to take a similar photograph. Apart from Father5commA who took his own photo, I took all others.

On one hand, my attempt to use photo elicitation to disrupt researcher-participant power dynamics only appeared to exacerbate it for most of the elder parents/grandparents appeared to *fear* the phablet which was more technologically advanced than the basic, non-smart, black and white screen mobile phones they owned and to which they were generally accustomed. Open participant-driven PEIs for me became open, researcher-facilitated PEIs – the extent to which they were driven by participants is arguable – that is participants' photographs were the result of my examples of a type of photo which could be taken. On the other hand, the assumption that PEIs would add depth to participant's responses did not necessarily hold. Because I wanted participants to already have a feel for the research area of interest, I waited until our third set of interactions before attempting PEIs, requesting that participants take a photo which could illustrate any aspect relevant to our previous discussions or any other schooling-relevant aspect they wanted to show me visually. However, participants appeared confused and wondered, some out loud, what the photos could possibly say that their words had not. Unlike Meo (2010) whose teenage participants felt the photos could speak for themselves, my elderly parents felt that their words were 'enough'. This is not surprising, given the *Yorùbá* culture is predominantly oral (Hallen, 2004) and its language highly figurative, employing sophisticated narrative imagery as demonstrated through poems and praises, particularly for monarchs (Akinyemi, 2004); praise songs and myths (Awe, 1974); and proverbs (Ademowo & Balogun, 2014); etc. My elder, rural-dwelling parents were steeped in this culture and their verbal sophistication was evident in the myriad ways they employed words to colourfully illustrate responses and convey ideas during our interactions. This 'adequacy of' the verbal also contradicts assumptions of its inadequacy (Prosser, 2013), assumptions which underpin the explosion of visual methods and their increasing inter-cultural transfer. While visual methods appear to have been used efficaciously among teenagers in rural/urban communities in Africa (see Corcoran, 2015; Milligan, 2016), the technique proved problematic amongst elderly rural parents in my North central Nigerian setting. Although it can be argued that the captured photos do support the data generated to some extent, it is more difficult to conclude that they meaningfully increased the research's participatory nature or provided further depth to our interactions. Nevertheless, the photographs taken have been interspersed throughout this thesis and identified accordingly.

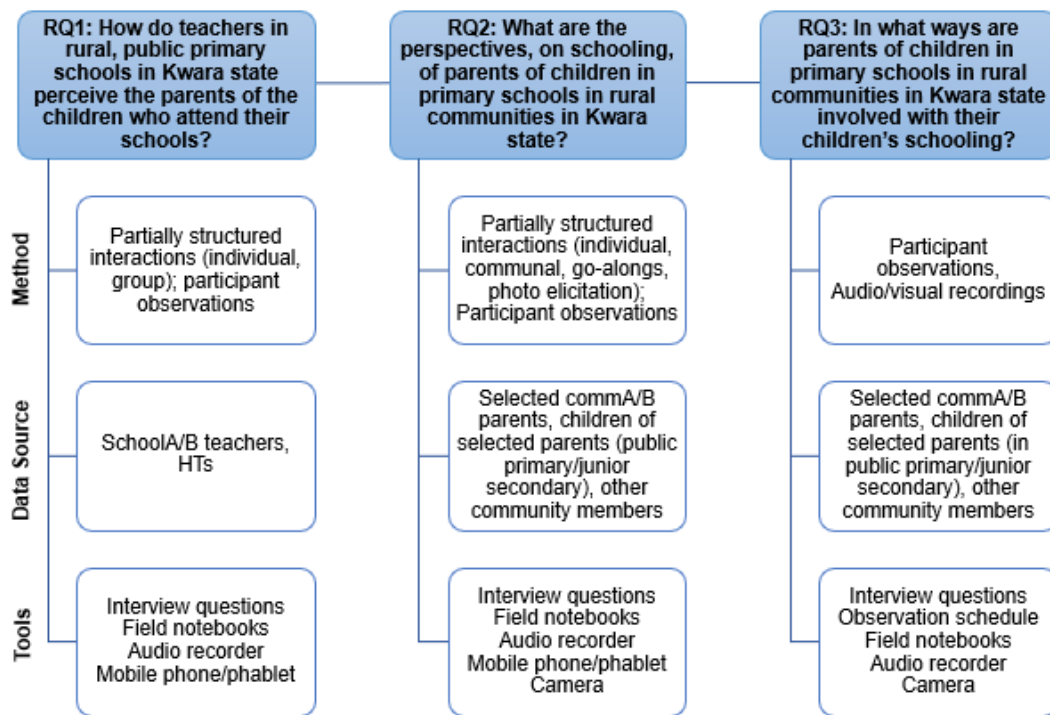
Go-alongs

Systematic, natural ‘go-alongs’ are an ethnographic ‘hybrid’ (p. 463) between participant observation and interviews where researchers follow participants on routine everyday activities (e.g., walks, errands, etc.) (Kusenbach, 2003) or “participate in [participants’] patterns of movement” (Kusenbach, 2018) to observe and interact with them, particularly regarding spatial phenomena. I had planned to use go-alongs to optimize the opportunity of speaking with parents who, as other scholars have found (e.g., Singh et al., 2004), can be difficult to reach. The closest applications of the technique in its actual sense were the interactions with the two commB fathers on their farms (i.e., ‘farm-alongs’). Go-alongs were limited in this study for a few reasons. One, there was no significant spatial dimension to the study. Two, even where some go-alongs may occur spontaneously, much of it appears to require some pre-arrangement (e.g., for a walk-along, the researcher needs to know the day and time of the walk-along and to have obtained participants’ prior consent). The participants in this study do not live such scheduled lives and as shown in footnote **81**, even where ‘appointments’ are attempted, the exigencies of participants’ lives increase the likelihood of non-adherence. Three, the requirements of mobility would have challenged elderly, busy or physically exhausted participants. Likewise, the notion of going for a leisurely walk or run is uncommon (participants live already physically demanding everyday lives e.g., farming, cooking, chores, fetching water, hawking, etc.) and leisure meant *immobility*: sitting (and resting) and talking with friends and families.

As seen in this section, carrying out partially structured interactions within participants’ settings required being attuned and responsive to participants’ ways of being. The approach aligns with Qu and Dumay (2011)’s localist, situated perspective on qualitative interviews which is reflexive, employs various interview styles and enables the eliciting of participants’ perspectives at a point in time and place. Evidently, the approach also fits with this study’s *Qmqlúàbí* moral ethical framework, specifically through its adherence to the principle of *adaptation to local ways of being and doing* and, more broadly, through its awareness of the interactional needs of participants during various ‘interactional encounters’ (Ayodele, 2016, p. 82).

In addition to methods discussed, I took other photographs and snippets of video with a camera (and sometimes with my mobile phone) to support the ethnographic data as visual accompaniments (O’Reilly, 2012), particularly to illustrate the research setting (e.g., **Figure 5.6**). The below synthesizes the above discussion by illustrating the methods and tools used to generate data with participants; the data sources; and the relationship of these to the research questions:

Figure 5.11 Research questions and their associated methods, tools and data sources



5.5. Data analysis

While it is generally accepted that ethnographic analysis is iterative and interwoven throughout all stages of research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; O'Reilly, 2012), this section discusses the analysis of the data generated during this study's fieldwork and follow-up. As has been noted, 22 core parents (10 commA and 12 commB), 15 children (seven commA and eight commB) and more than 100 other community members, alongside 23 teachers (15 schoolA and eight schoolB), contributed to individual, pair, group and casual interactions (see **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**). Photographs were also taken and notes recorded in school compounds under gathering trees, at hitchhiking junctions, in multi-passenger taxis, and in tricycles (called *maruwa* or *keke napep*). As **Figure 5.12** below shows, the data corpus consisted of handwritten and typed field (observation) and reflective notes; audio recorded individual and groups interviews, morning assembly speeches, parents' meetings, field and reflective notes; and visual material (photographs). As noted in the previous section, some few minutes of video were also filmed but, with the exception of a still image used in **Figure 8.3**, these did not comprise the analyzed data set as they were generated primarily to support the textual data, rather than to provide additional analytical insight. Handwritten field notes were later typed and assembled with the other field notes previously typed on the mobile device. The data set therefore included more than 50 hours of audio recordings, 318 pages of handwritten notes, 1000 photographs, and 160,000 typed words. Handwritten reflective notes were not typed but given their analytical nature, employed as analytical memos (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019) and juxtaposed alongside

emerging ideas during the coding process as will be later described. During both fieldwork phases, audio recordings and typed data were transferred daily to my laptop unto the institution's cloud storage system and organized in folders according to fieldwork phase (i.e., fieldwork and follow-up), and thereafter according to fieldwork day and school/community (e.g., Day1 SchoolA 13Dec2018). Visual material from each phase was organized in subfolders within each phase's folder, also according to the day of fieldwork and school/community. Some photographs were captioned to provide more details about their content where these were not obvious. After the fieldwork, files and folders were reviewed and, in some cases, renamed to facilitate future data search. A data log was also created in Microsoft Excel to itemize the data types and quantity (according to their files names) for each fieldwork day. The log was later used to categorize the different data types, as outlined in **Figure 5.12**.

Figure 5.12 Fieldwork data classification

Data Type	# Pages	Length_mins	Photo count	Word count	Grand Total
Audio		3164.42			3164.42
Casual Chat		175.77			175.77
Field Notes		143.14			143.14
Interview		2576.26			2576.26
Morning Assembly		60.58			60.58
Other_Classroom		3.52			3.52
Other_Radioad		0.32			0.32
Parents Meeting		200.65			200.65
Reflective Notes		4.18			4.18
Visual			1037		1037
Photographs			1037		1037
Written_Hand	318				318
Field Notes	166				166
Field Notes_Obs schedule	48				48
Reflective Notes	104				104
Written_Typed				164918	164918
Field Notes				158635	158635
Reflective Notes				6283	6283
Grand Total	318	3164.42	1037	164918	169533.57
Grand Total (Audio Hours)		52.7			

To analyze the data set, the study was guided by thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical method which identifies themes which “capture something important about the data in relation to the research question and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 82). Thematic analysis was chosen given its flexibility for different types of data generated from multiple methods (McAllum et al., 2019), particularly for data generated, as in this study, incrementally over a period of time, sometimes in small amounts, and with different types of participants. Such complex data, generated from a wide range of interactions, is well suited to an analytical method which searches for patterns and builds themes and which doesn't override the complexity of the data itself. Thematic analysis is also theoretically flexible. Though it provides a systematic analytical method for qualitative data analysis, it does not prescribe a theoretical position or make ontological or epistemological assumptions (Braun &

Clarke, 2013). As such, it can be combined with diverse theoretical approaches and perspectives. Although thematic analysis is an implicit method of qualitative analysis (Morgan, 2021), Braun & Clarke (2006, 2021a) have identified six phases of inductive thematic analysis – see **Table 5.1** – by which this study is guided. The scholars have also articulated their preference for a *reflexive* thematic analysis – the same six phases but with greater explicitness about the influence of researcher subjectivity on the analytical and overall research process (Braun & Clarke, 2021b) – and it is evident from the current and preceding chapters that this thesis is in keeping with this new label. The six phases, as they were applied within this study, are hereby discussed.

Table 5.1 Six phases of inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Title	Description
1	Familiarization with data	Transcribe data while noting initial ideas
2	Generation of initial codes	Systematically code (i.e., assign word(s) or phrase to) notable excerpts of data.
3	Search for themes	Aggregate codes into possible (provisional) themes
4	Review of themes	Check whether themes align with coded extracts (Level 1) and entire data set (Level 2). Generate thematic ‘map’.
5	Definition and naming of themes	Continuously analyze and refine themes to generate clear meanings and names for each.
6	Writing of report	Select (and re-analyze) extracts for each theme, ensuring relevance to research question and literature. Write analytical report.

Phase one consists of familiarization with the data and, as the above table outlines, this is principally achieved through transcription, which serves an analytical function. About seven months were spent transcribing the audio data from fieldwork into Microsoft Word documents with the aid of a transcription foot pedal. The task was especially long and arduous given all interactions occurred in *Yorùbá*, with communal colloquialisms and speech forms, and no *Yorùbá* transcription software existed. As already noted, many individual interactions became communal as other community members interjected, interrupted and at times, participated throughout. While this deepened and enriched interactions, it also lengthened their transcription. Although I began to transcribe partway through fieldwork, this became physically and emotionally difficult to sustain alongside the main fieldwork activity; thus, I stopped and began again after returning to the UK post fieldwork. All fieldwork audio recordings were transcribed.

An additional month was spent transcribing audio recordings after the follow-up, a total of eight months of transcription (of the 53 hours of audio data), and organizing the data set. The extensive transcription time, as implied by phase one, ensured deep familiarization with the data and each transcript was accompanied by notes (emerging ideas and quotes) and a glossary of key *Yorùbá* terms whose meanings I confirmed with key contacts. The notes and glossary were prepared in Microsoft Excel, and the latter included both modified literal (faithful to source language) and idiomatic (faithful to receptor language) translations (“Kinds of Translation”, 2016). To manage the tension in re-presenting participants’ lives through another culture’s linguistic framework, the transcripts themselves combined lexical – word-for-

word – and conceptual – equivalents of ideas at the sentence level – translations while retaining participants’ cultural tone (Cormier, 2018). This mixed approach also underscored that interactions did not occur in English and preserved, to some extent, the richness and complexity of participants’ language. As such, to the English reader, the rendering of certain quotes may appear ‘awkward’ (Kouritzin, 2002, as cited in Cormier, 2018); however, this should be understood as the outcome of a reflexive translation rather than as a reflection on the beauty of participants’ language. Where helpful, clarifying terms have been included in brackets to aid English readers’ understanding. Similarly, key *Yorùbá* terms have been retained within quotes, particularly where there were no English equivalents or where the closest equivalents lost nuance or emphasis. An example is the *Yorùbá* term ‘*o*’, a filler word which has no meaning of itself but is used to denote emphasis of what was hitherto spoken. All instances of ‘*o*’ have been preserved within quotations.

Phase two entails the generation of initial codes. In thematic analysis, a theme consists of one or multiple group(s) of codes: terms or phrases which capture the essence of parts of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Similarly, Saldaña (2021, p. 5), defines codes as “word[s] or short phrase[s] that symbolically assign a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute” to segments of data. Coding was done in two phases, first for the transcribed fieldwork data prior to the follow-up stage, and second for the transcribed follow-up and fieldwork data combined. This stepwise coding was done mainly to assign relevant codes as guided by the research questions, i.e., about parents’ views and practices around schooling (and teachers’ views on these), and to identify potential data gaps towards generating relevant interview questions for the follow-up stage. For the fieldwork data (prior to follow-up), initial codes were generated on print-outs of transcripts of all interactions with parents, teachers and children. Given the incremental nature of interactions, usually multiple (rather than singular) lines/sentences were coded to capture meaning and content of the specific segments of transcripts. These segments, or meaning units (McAllum et al., 2019), were generally coded using ‘descriptive’ (Saldaña, 2021) or ‘semantic’ (Braun & Clarke, 2013) codes which are based on the main idea or semantic meaning of the unit (e.g., *fees payment, consequences lack of provision of materials, consequences of lack of schooling, farming as priority*, etc.). Process codes (which capture action (Saldaña, 2021) or events (McAllum et al., 2019)) were also assigned, though to a lesser extent, to some meaning units, such as those about parents’ practices around schooling (e.g., *hurrying children to school, sanctioning each other at PTA meetings, asking about specific teachers*, etc.) and schools’ practices (e.g., *record keeping, taking attendance at PTA meetings, sending late children home*, etc.). Often, multiples codes were assigned to the same meaning unit (Braun & Clarke, 2013), highlighting the interconnectedness of ideas within data segments. This method is known as simultaneous coding (Saldaña, 2021). In-vivo codes (words or phrases used by participants) (McAllum et al., 2019) were not assigned as all transcripts/notes had been translated into English. **Table 5.2** below illustrates the initial codes assigned to meaning units within an excerpt from a fieldwork conversation with Father8commA. All

codes assigned within the excerpt are descriptive. Evidently, in addition to being influenced by research questions (in turn influenced by the literature), the choice of phrases / terms for codes was influenced by my positionality; methodological (ethnographic) and theoretical perspectives; as well as personality and experiences (Saldaña, 2021).

Table 5.2 The coding process: Initial coding

Excerpt broken down into meaning units	Initial codes
Like me now, all the children that, we're just sending, we're just struggling to send them.	Parents' struggles to provide for schooling
My NCE who finished last year now, four children, who are also looking to do their degree, it remains, I also still have two there now who are presently doing their NCE. I have one degree who's also doing, who's doing presently, who will also finish this year. I have one degree also at the University of Ilorin, who is also a girl, she will also finish this year.	Youth with (or completing) tertiary level schooling
But all of them like that now, it remains for them to graduate and find jobs. There won't be jobs.	Lack of jobs for youth after tertiary completion
So [unemployment] has enabled that gap to be, that gap of going to school, what is enabling it to reduce is that they finish reading (i.e., going to school) and they do not find jobs.	Narrowed gap b/w the schooled and the unschooled
Those who are now going out, where others finish secondary school or even still primary school, who are going to learning work, so those ones, when these ones when they finish degree, finish everything, they (those ones) have done freedom (i.e., have graduated from the work they're learning). They have begun work, they'll be able to build their homes, others will be buying cars.	Difference between handiwork and schooling
So that gap is like, it seems like even those who have gone to school, even they are looking at it like, 'what exactly have we gone to school for?' From the fact that they're not quickly able to find jobs to do so that they can also become people. It could be in the future, you know that if they find work, like in line with school, they now get in front (i.e. surpass those who didn't go to school),	Youths' lack of interest / demotivation for schooling Parents' interest vs youth lack of interest
but, pffft, it's no longer quick anymore, pffft, or are you not hearing me? ... It's not quick anymore, if it's not a child who has heart who has perseverance, who is long suffering, whose father is also not silent	Delay in gain from investment in schooling Youths' interest / motivation for schooling Parents' persistence with schooling

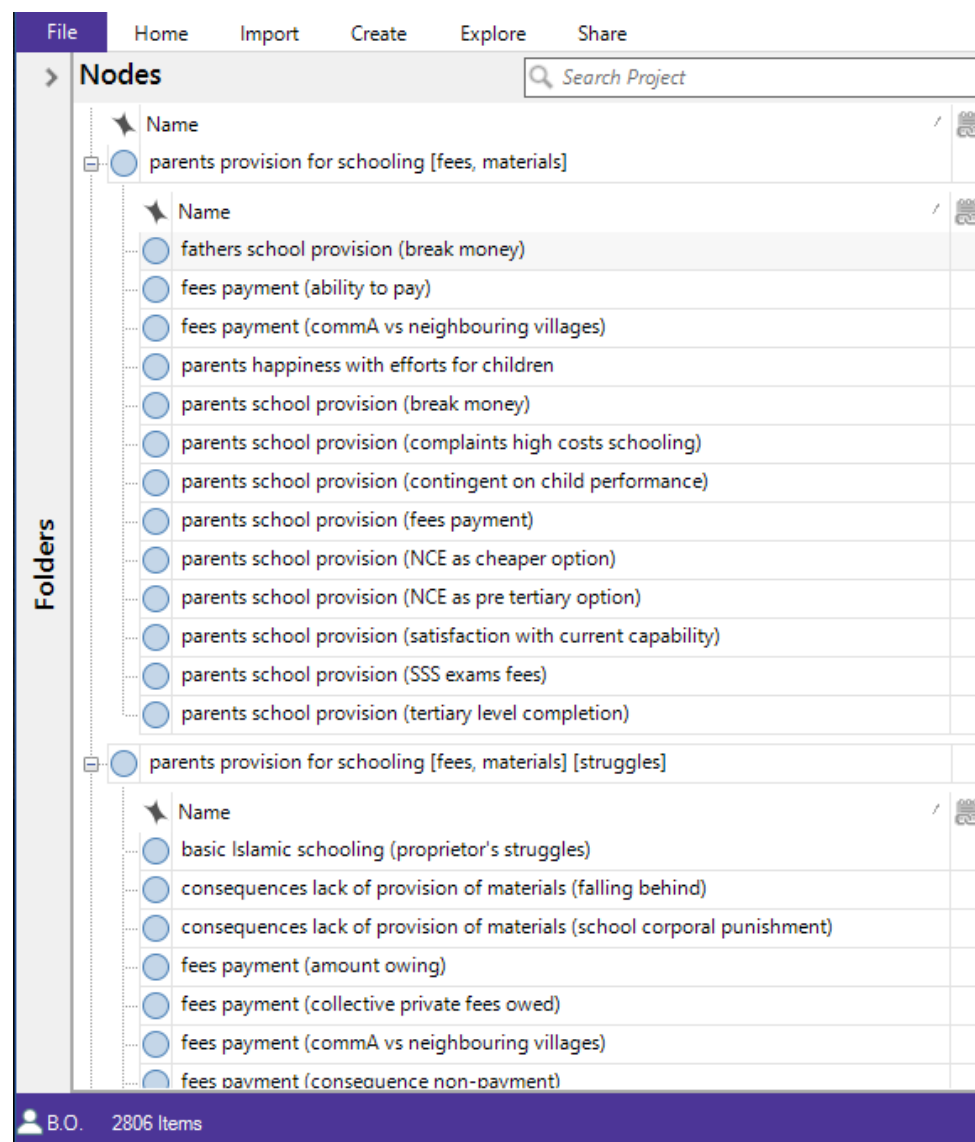
The initial codes were then highlighted on the transcripts in Microsoft Word (as comments) and later transferred to and organized in Microsoft Excel to generate a list of codes. The appropriateness of codes and relevance of initial follow-up questions (as guided by initial codes) were assured through extensive pre-follow-up discussions with supervisors, a peer debriefing process which enhanced credibility: fit between participants' views and researcher's representation (Nowell et al., 2017). Notably, the diversity of methods and their accordant data, as will be demonstrated in **Chapter 8** in the comparison of reported and observed schooling engagement, enabled the triangulation of inferences across a variety of data sources to determine those most likely to be valid (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). The follow-up stage also served an important validation function as broad ideas about the fieldwork data were shared with participants before our interactions. This generally elicited a nodding of the head though as Atkinson & Hammersley (2007) suggest, validation exercises are best viewed as another valuable data source, rather than a validation of the analysis.

After follow-up, three months were spent (re)generating initial codes for the aggregate data set (combined fieldwork and follow-up), including all fieldnotes (typed and handwritten converted to typed) and typed reflective notes. Given the size of the aggregate data set, this time NVivo 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), was used. The transcripts were organized into parents', children's, teachers' and fieldnotes (including voice and reflective notes) folders within the software. Existing codes (initial codes for fieldwork data) were reviewed with minimal changes made and the new set of initial codes for the aggregate data was highly detailed: some 2806 codes were inductively generated across the data set. This level of detail was not pre-planned and is attributable to various factors. First, while the data set was coded primarily guided by the research questions around parents' views and practices around schooling, including instances of school-based and home-based parental involvement activities (Barger et al., 2019), codes were also assigned to meaning units given their potential importance (outside of the research questions). Being unsure, at this stage, of what will ultimately be important for the analysis or included in the thesis, I decided to code virtually the entire data set. Potentially important meaning units included those relative to teachers' professional and personal lives, and children's performance in schooling. Codes were also assigned relative to the methodology, particularly fieldwork experiences and ethics (e.g., *participants disinterest*, *perceptions of researcher*, etc.), and there were some 376 initial methodology-related codes. Second, although using CAQDAS enables ease of coding and the ability to delve deeper into the data, scholars have noted that this ease also often results in the generation of too many codes (e.g., Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019) particularly when coding inductively and, as was in my case, for the emergent coder. Third, not all initial codes were unique codes. Some codes were reassigned across the different groups of transcripts (e.g., the initial code *handiwork (women's marital ease)* was assigned to meaning units across both parents' transcripts and fieldnotes), creating some double counting. Finally, the large volume of the data set itself, attributable in some ways to the translation from Yorùbá to English which required more English words to explain participants' Yorùbá ideas, increased the potential for a high number of codes. As Saldaña (2021, p. 20) acknowledges, the first attempt at coding is rarely perfect, and the entire coding process is cyclical, iterative and fluid rather than mechanistic or precise. Nevertheless, the factors identified here will be further reflected upon to draw insights for future coding exercises. **Figure 5.13** below illustrates some of the initial codes in NVivo (the child node phrases such as *fathers school provision (break money)*, *basic Islamic schooling (proprietor's struggles)*, etc.).

Though the detail of the initial codes significantly deepened my familiarization with the data, it made it difficult to generate themes directly. As such, another cycle of coding was required to help further filter and focus the data in preparation for thematization. Initial codes were aggregated up one level to a higher level of codes (in **Figure 5.13**, *parents' provision for schooling [fees, materials]* and *parents provision for schooling [fees, materials] [struggles]*). This process generated 516 higher-level codes (175 for parents, 153 for fieldnotes, 136 for teachers and 52 for children), some similarly worded as initial codes though with

less detail. Like the initial codes, some of these recurred across the different groups of transcripts and were therefore not all unique. For example, the higher-level *parents provision for schooling [fees, materials]* was assigned to meaning units across the parents, children and fieldnotes data while *parents provision for schooling [fees, materials] [struggles]* was assigned to meaning units across the parents, teachers and fieldnotes data. Being primarily a code reduction strategy, higher-level codes generally retained the descriptive/semantic characteristic of the initial codes. However, as seen with *parents provision for schooling [fees, materials]*, some higher-level codes were assigned deductively, using the typologies of parental involvement (Barger et al., 2019) introduced in **3.2**. Other deductive higher-level codes include *conversations about schooling, homework (parents role in), school establishment*, etc. This practice of drawing on existing concepts or literature as one moves to higher levels has been identified by others (e.g., Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Notably, though the qualitative coding process usually begins with either inductive or deductive coding, it is common for it to eventually include both types, according to the purpose of the analysis (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019) and in a way which enables meaningful response to one's research questions. After higher-level codes were generated, all transcribed data were reread and reviewed to ensure appropriate codes had been assigned to all meaning units within the data set. Few minimal changes were made to the phrasing of codes.

Figure 5.13 Initial coding in Nvivo



Phases three, four and five comprise searching for, reviewing and refining themes. As earlier defined, themes capture something important and represent some patterned response within the data set which illuminates the research questions. They are thus broader than codes (in this case, higher-level codes) and typically consist of several codes connected by a concept or an idea (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2021a). Importantly, identifying themes requires reviewing not just codes, but their meaning units to identify the ideas or issues which connect the latter. To identify themes from the higher-level codes, meanings units were reread and analyzed to draw out their interconnected ideas. As noted earlier in this section, handwritten reflective notes and notes taken during the transcription process were also reviewed to check earlier analytical ideas about the potential issues within the data. For instance, reflecting the later identified theme of *schooling as injustice*, the following is an extract from reflective notes written during fieldwork:

Poor (less connected) people have less means or connection to 'eat' from education or use it as the source of their daily bread.

- Rich or well-connected people can use it to access salaried government jobs (no notion of private sector in the data thus far)
- Rich or well-connected use it to further their political careers
- Schooling as perpetuating inequality between the rich and poor

(17/02/2019)

In all, 50 candidate/potential themes were identified, 27 of these from interactions with and observations of teachers (e.g., *uninterested parents and fathers, parents' understanding of schooling, duties of a teacher, etc.*), and 23 from interactions and observations of parents and children (transcripts and fieldnotes) (e.g., *children's busy lives, diverse views of learning, rural parents' lives, etc.*). Of these, 13 themes resonated across both the teacher and parent/children data, e.g., *at risk of being out of school, uninterested parents and fathers, corruption and poor governance, parents' understanding of schooling, parent school relations, etc.* For example, the central idea behind *uninterested parents and fathers* was participants' views of some parents' (particularly fathers') lack of interest in children's schooling. That behind *corruption and poor governance* was the perception of the poor governance and management of the state/national education (and other) system due to politics and corruption. Candidate themes were reviewed to ensure clarity of scope and purpose, and named to highlight the content and analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Notably, while the coding process thus far has been holistic, occurring across the data set, refining themes in this study required narrowing down to those candidate themes most relevant to the research questions and through which greater insight may be enabled by the study's conceptual framework. For instance, due to the study's focus on parents' views and practices, various themes from the teacher data (e.g., *duties of a teacher, teachers professional lives, school leadership and management, etc.*) and few from the parent/children data (e.g., *difficult lives of children, how children learn, parent school relations, etc.*) were not significantly explored within the thesis. 21 themes (11 parents including methodology and 10 teachers) were used in the analysis. Nine of these resonated across both parents' and teachers' data e.g., *at risk of being out-of-school, corruption and poor governance, uninterested parents and fathers, diverse views on learning, parents' perspectives on schooling, parents' understanding of schooling, rural parents' lives, parents' everyday involvement and school as a site of cultural reinforcement.*

This phase also included a renaming of themes as the writing process progressed. For instance, the theme *diverse views on learning* was later rephrased as *parental ethnotheories (7.3)*. For a few themes, subthemes – notable ideas of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013) – were identified to help facilitate the discussion of themes. For example, the theme *parents' perspectives on schooling* is discussed within the thesis (7.4) as

four subthemes: *parents' valuing of schooling*, *schooling as an investment*, *schooling as a poor investment* and *schooling as injustice*. Like themes, some subthemes were also progressively renamed. For instance, the subtheme initially phrased *struggling mothers* later became *women are the men*, *men are the women*, and during writing, became *there are no husbands*, *there are only children*, a phrase extracted from a teacher at school A J/SSS. **Table 5.3** illustrates the development of a themes and subthemes using some of the initial codes from **Table 5.2**. Existing mind map software proved difficult to organize the large number of codes and themes; therefore, mapping from higher-level codes to themes was carried out in Excel.

Table 5.3 The coding process: From Initial codes to themes

Excerpt broken down into meaning units	Initial codes	Higher-level codes	Themes (subthemes)
Like me now, all the children that, we're just sending, we're just struggling to send them.	Parents' struggles to provide for schooling	Parents provision for schooling	Parents' everyday involvement (school-based practices / provision)
My NCE who finished last year now, four children, who are also looking to do their degree, it remains, I also still have two there now who are presently doing their NCE. I have one degree who's also doing, who's doing presently, who will also finish this year. I have one degree also at the University of Ilorin, who is also a girl, she will also finish this year.	Youth with (or completing) tertiary level schooling	Parents provision for schooling	Parents' everyday involvement (school-based practices / provision)
But all of them like that now, it remains for them to graduate and find jobs. There won't be jobs.	Lack of jobs for youth after tertiary completion	Limitations of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (investment returns are no longer quick)
So [unemployment] has enabled that gap to be, that gap of going to school, what is enabling it to reduce is that they finish reading (i.e., going to school) and they do not find jobs.	Narrowed gap b/w the schooled and the unschooled	Limitations of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (investment returns are no longer quick)
Those who are now going out, where others finish secondary school or even still primary school, who are going to learning work, so those ones, when these ones when they finish degree, finish everything, they (those ones) have done freedom (i.e., have graduated from the work they're learning). They have begun work, they'll be able to build their homes, others will be buying cars.	Difference between handiwork and schooling	Benefits of handiwork	Parental ethnotheories (desired learning capabilities)
		Limitations of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (investment returns are no longer quick)
So that gap is like, it seems like even those who have gone to school, even they are looking at it like, 'what exactly have we gone to school for?' From the fact that they're not quickly able to find jobs to do so that they can also become people. It could be in the future, you know that if they find work, like in line with school, they now get in front (i.e., surpass those who didn't go to school),	Youths' lack of interest / demotivation for schooling	Limitations of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (investment returns are no longer quick)
	Parents' interest vs youth lack of interest	Parents' valuing of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (schooling is like an investment)

but, pffft, it's no longer quick anymore, pffft, or are you not hearing me? ... It's not quick anymore, if it's not a child who has heart who has perseverance, who is long suffering, whose father is also not silent	Delay in gain from investment in schooling	Limitations of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (investment returns are no longer quick)
	Youths' interest / motivation for schooling	Benefits of schooling	Parents' perspectives on schooling (schooling is like an investment)
	Parents' persistence with schooling	Parents' valuing of schooling	

Phase six requires selecting extracts for themes in relation to research questions and literature, towards writing the thesis. Selected quotes and extracts were those which illuminated participants' shared (or, sometimes, contradictory) perspectives, or employed examples or narratives which illustrated their viewpoint around a research question. Writing the thesis also required a consideration of the thesis structure. For this, relevant theme names were employed as section titles within findings chapters (e.g., **7.3**, **7.4**, **7.5**, **8.3**, etc.), and where applicable, subtheme names as subsection titles (e.g., **6.3.1**, **6.3.2**, **6.4.1**, **7.4.1**, **7.4.2**, etc.), followed by the discussion of each theme/subtheme. However, not all themes or subthemes were used as [sub]section titles. The main ideas within other themes were embedded within discussions in other sections of the findings without explicitly using theme names as titles. For instance, ideas within the theme *methodology* were used in the discussion of my positionality (**1.2** and **4.4**) and the *Qmplúàbí* moral ethical framework (**4.3**); while those from *teachers' personal lives* and *teachers knowledge about children and communities* were used to discuss the influences on teachers' perceptions of parents, in relation to the first research question (**6.5.2**). Notably, a capability analysis was woven around the thematic analysis to explore the extent of parental agency in relation to the deductive higher-level codes (typologized parental involvement practices). The method for the capability analysis is discussed in **6.4.2** and **8.3**.

While specific themes (and sub-themes) were examined (e.g., **7.4**) or codes used to identify capabilities (e.g., **7.3**), ultimately, the ideas within themes and meaning units within codes were used interpretively to *investigate experiences*: explore participants' perspectives, functionings, capabilities and practices, particularly recurrent ones (Costa et al., 2019); and *identify causes*: reveal patterns relevant to attitudes or events, analyze similarities and differences between the two school-communities, and explore the influences on participants' perspectives and experiences (Hammersley, 2012). Thus, the analysis did not simply examine the relationships between codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019) or write the findings as a series of themes as might be implied by the description of phase six. To write the findings, the analysis transcended themes to interpret and uncover the context and conditions which enable the realities constructed within and thematized from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Moreover, the identification of causes does not imply statistical causation and is not antithetical to constructivism: most qualitative researchers employ the technique as signalled by terms such as 'influence', 'leads to', 'results in', 'contributes to', among others (Hammersley 2008, as cited in

Hammersley, 2012). Given large similarities across both communities, coding and thematization were done for both communities as an aggregate while notable differences or contradictions were identified within themes and thereafter discussed.

As noted, thematic analysis does not specify a paradigm, theory, or methodology. Therefore, it does not contend epistemologically or methodologically with this study's Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework. Moreover, though the capability approach suggests broad sources and processes of selecting capabilities – including empirical data and evidence-based assumptions which this thesis uses (Alkire, 2008b) – which incorporate dialogic elements (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007), the process is open to diverse analytical methods of selection. Thematic analysis' flexibility moreover aligns with the Bourdieuan notion of researcher reflexivity which underscores an a posteriori application of theoretical tools to empirical data to answer one's research questions (Costa et al., 2019).

5.6. Quality considerations

Trustworthiness – credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln et al., 2011, 2017) – is typically used to assess quality within qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Credibility, the accuracy of findings or the consistency of findings with reality (Lincoln et al., 2011, 2017) has been ensured in this study through the triangulation of multiple ethnographic data generation methods as well as sources. Peer checking through extensive discussions and review of transcripts with the supervision team, particularly in the lead up to the follow-up visit, and the participant validation that occurred during this visit, further enhanced credibility. Participants' honesty and the researcher's familiarity with participants' culture (Shenton, 2004) were also key contributors. Of importance here is the role of the *Qmólúàbí* moral ethical framework which enabled the building and deepening of trust with participants who thence spoke and acted as their true, ethical selves. As noted in **4.3.3**, this ethical selfhood was highlighted by the commA grandmother who disclosed that "if we don't trust you that there's no trouble, we won't be saying all the things we're saying, not that we won't be saying it, we won't be saying *all* of it...".

Transferability is the extent to which the research is true of other participants in similar settings (Shenton, 2004), an oft contested criterion due to its echoes of positivist generalizability. Given generalizability is not the goal of qualitative research which seeks depth rather than breadth (Cohen et al., 2018), scholars suggest an assessment of transferability may only be possible by the reader, a condition which implies the task of the researcher is to provide sufficient contextual information to enable the reader to make their own "transferability inferences" based on their knowledge of other comparable contexts (p. 70). This study has achieved transferability by providing in-depth contextual information to equip readers to meaningfully do this. Transferability can also be deepened if research is undertaken in different environments and this

study's conduct in two different communities and its demonstration of similarities between them – even as it highlights contradictions – fulfils this aim.

To realize dependability, this study has ensured traceability and clarity on the research process (Nowell et al., 2017), including the various conceptual, methodological, and analytical decisions and choices made. These have been aided by a reflexive journal employed to document day to day decisions as well as record personal reflections. By explaining how credibility, transferability and dependability have been achieved, this study has established confirmability and thereby demonstrated that its findings and interpretations derive from the data generated (Nowell et al., 2017). As such, this study fulfils the criteria of trustworthiness.

5.7. Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the two school-communities of this study and discussed the peculiarities of sampling, obtaining consent, and the nonconformist ways research methods transpired in practice, particularly how individualist ones contended with communities' communalist epistemologies. It has also described the study's inductive thematic analysis process, considering how language tensions were mitigated through reflexive translation which sought to maintain the richness and nuance of participants' language. The next three chapters present the findings and respond to research questions 1 to 3, respectively.

Proverb 1. Schooling is subordinate to sustenance

O un taa jẹ sàgbà oun taada

-What we'll eat [today] is the senior of what we'll become (today's sustenance takes precedence over schooling and its future aspirations). (*Unknown commB parent, teacher reported*)

Chapter 6. Teachers' perceptions of parents

6.1. Introduction

The data generated using the methods discussed in **Chapter 5** enabled the answers to the first research question which asks, '*How do teachers in rural, public primary schools in Kwara state perceive the parents of the children who attend their schools?*' Analyzing data from field notes, and individual and group interactions with teachers, the chapter begins with an in-depth discussion of the findings on the capability space, including what teachers believe parents value and their understanding of what parents do. It then discusses teachers' perception of the social space, particularly how field structures, capital, and habitus, underpin parents' values and influence their practices. The chapter concludes with a discussion of these findings in relation to the literature.

6.2. Data sources

23 different teachers (nine male, 14 female) participated in individual and group interactions in both schools during stages two (17 teachers) and three (10 teachers, four from stage two) (see **Appendix B**). KC2 (schoolA J/SSS Principal) was amongst those interviewed, given he previously headed schoolB (1.2) and could offer a comparative view of both communities. **Table 6.1** indicates the number of teachers across all interactions (schoolA custodian has been included, for a total of 28):

Table 6.1 Number of teachers in individual/group interactions

	SchoolA						SchoolB		
	Teachers		Other staff*		Other teachers**		Teachers		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Stage2	3	4	1	-	4	1	1	4	18
Stage3	-	5	-	-	-	-	1	4	10
Total	3	9	1	0	4	1	2	8	28

*custodian; **KC2 and three colleagues plus another J/SSS teacher who contributed to the interaction with the custodian

6.3. The capability space: Teachers' perspectives on parental functionings

As the global and sub-Saharan literature in 3.2.1 and 3.3.2 demonstrate, parents' views of schooling are connected to their perceptions of how schools view them. While parents are the focal participants of this study (and the next two chapters examine their perspectives and capabilities in detail), understanding how teachers perceive them provides additional insight into the potential barriers or opportunities they face in their attempts to involve themselves in schooling. Gleaning teachers' perceptions (i.e., of parental functionings) through the capabilities approach, moreover, ensures analytical consistency with the

subsequent two chapters. Although this may appear to contest the essence of the approach whose ethical individualism – as discussed in **3.4.1** – suggests individuals serve as the locus of their own value judgment (Alkire, 2008c), enabling parents to thereafter articulate their own functionings resolves the tensions that may arise when using the approach to *only* identify perceptions of others' values. Teachers across both schools elicited varied but nuanced perspectives around what they believe the parents in their school-communities value. Though the fervency with which functionings were evoked differed, similar themes were identified in both schools. These are discussed in the rest of this section.

6.3.1. Uninterested parents, especially fathers

At both schools, teachers were vociferous about parents whom they believed were uninterested in the schooling of their children. 11 of the 17 different teachers across both schools, for instance, emphasized this view. Often, teachers' views of parents' uninterest were presented in the form of corollaries: parents were not interested in children's schooling because they were interested in or had other, more highly rated, functionings. Of these others, according to schoolB teachers, farming was primary. Such was its importance that it was mentioned by *every* schoolB teacher during our individual interactions in fieldwork. For instance, when asked whether her engagement with commB families constituted her official duties or was supplementary to them, the schoolB HT responded:

It's part of our official duty, I also now 'added more', according to how I have my own 'intelligence'. So I now added to it. Because these *ará oko* (i.e., rural people)⁸², if you get there, and you take a hard position, they won't want to listen to you. That their children are going to the *oko* (i.e., farm) is better than you saying they should come to school. (2019/01/17)

Speaking similarly, regarding the extent to which she tries to engage with parents (given her previous teaching experience in other rural communities), the primary 3 (P3) teacher noted:

Uhhnn, ahh! Ehnn, one will do it more than that of the town. 'Being that' because those *ará oko* now, you know that they have, they have, their own work is that of the *oko*. Ehnn? Ehnnn! And the majority of parents are these, they want that, they 'prefer' that their children be at the *oko*, to be doing *oko* work more than they should be coming to school. (2019/02/12)

⁸² *Ara oko* literally means 'of the bush' (Falola & Adebayo, 2017) or 'of the farm' and is used, often derogatorily, to refer to people who live in rural areas. However, it can also be used endearingly (nostalgically) or jokingly (i.e., one may refer to him/herself as being an '*ara oko*' to show pride in their heritage). *Oko* means 'farm' or 'farming' though may also be used more derogatorily as 'bush'. The type of use depends on the context of the statement or conversation.

For the P6 teacher, unlike other parents who hire lesson teachers to buttress their children's schooling after school, schoolB children's "lesson teacher is the *oko*" and the children only know how to "go to the *oko*, fetch water, [and] go plant cassava" (P6&Arabic 2019/02/05). She went on to share an example of an elderly father who, when teachers tried to persuade him to let his child continue to attend school would retort, "school for what?!" Such was his valuing of farming over schooling that he would come to school to beat his child, insisting the child must immediately proceed to the farm. The valuing of farming by commB parents was re-emphasized during the follow-up visit. During a group interaction, I asked teachers what they thought children did once they arrived home after school and the following ensued:

P6: Ahh! *Oko* (farm) galore! Mine go to the *oko*!

P3: There are many things...

P4: Mine are going to the *oko*!

P2: Others are learning *isê ɔwô* (i.e., handiwork)

....

P4: They won't be able to do it (i.e., their assignment) at home

P1: They'll take them to the *oko* is it!

P6: They won't have time to do it at all, it's the *oko* they're going to

P3: The *oko*!

B: So, is it only the *oko*? Ok, the *oko* and *isê ɔwô*.

P3: [simultaneously] the *oko* and *isê ɔwô*!

....

P6: Ahh! They don't value it o!

P2: They value this *oko* –

P1: They don't value it! They'll say that-

P4: [to B] Mother! Ehnn, they value this *oko* more than-

P6: More than 'education' -

P4: -'education'!

...

P3: It's better for them to go to the *oko*! Uhnn!

P1: You know that if they start an *oko* now? It's better than what-

P6: So that they can eat on time!

(SchoolBTeachers 2019/11/20)

Although within this discussion, the P2 teacher (P5 during fieldwork) noted that “other [children] are also learning *isẹ ọwọ*”⁸³ and the P4 (P3 during fieldwork) offered that children’s home activities comprised “the *oko* and *isẹ ọwọ*,” parents’ valuing of farming was an unequivocal view shared by schoolB teachers.

At schoolA, parents’ valuing (and prioritization) of farming was mentioned within the context of what I call the *kóró* rush⁸⁴ during February and March when families frequently went to farms, often trespassing others’ farms, to pick *kóró* (cashews) whose lucrative nuts were sold along a chain of local buyers, wholesalers, etc., all the way up to big agribusinesses. The following transpired during a particularly charged inspection exercise one morning during the schoolA assembly:

AssistantHT: [to the children] Be washing your clothes, it’s not good like this! You’re too dirty! Look at how you are?!

Teacher1: The parents of some, they don’t have time.

AssistantHT: Ah ha! You’re now saying their mother has gone to *oko kóró*, their father has gone to *oko kóró*, will they not find someone at home there? Please, the children will now, will now be looking like thing, and you’ll be bringing them! When they wake up, they’ll carry the sticks of *oko kóró*!

...

Teacher2: They can’t do anything for the children, what is happening?

AssistantHT: They’ll tell them to be going to school, the ‘nanny’ mothers are there, they’ll be taking care of them!

HT: ...they’re going to *oko kóró*...

AssistantHT: When they wake up, they’re going to *oko kóró* is that! They’ll say they (i.e., others) should be taking them to school!

Teacher3: Those who are going [to *oko kóró*] are in my house also, they have also woken up since 5:00am that they’re preparing the children...

AssistantHT: But they’ll [first] take care of the children?! When they finish taking care of the children, then they’ll be going [to *oko kóró*], no?! (2019/02/13)

⁸³ *Isẹ ọwọ* – manual work or labour (see Glossary (*Yorùbá*)) – is used in this thesis to encompass the range of informal, vocational, apprenticeships and occupations common in the research context.

⁸⁴ When cashew fruits ripen at the beginning of the year, communities (largely women) flock to farms to pick them and remove the nut-filled shells atop the fruits to dry and sell (only a small proportion is locally consumed). The epicentre of the cashew nut trade in Nigeria is a large town in a neighbouring state. Once during observation of a P4 class at schoolA (fieldwork), the teacher asked about an absent learner. The children said she had travelled with her mother to pick cashews in the epicentre town.

Parents' valuing of *oko kóró* was reiterated by schoolA teachers during casual conversations under the gathering tree, particularly when mothers walked through the school compound with long sticks to or from *oko kóró*, sometimes with a school-aged child in tow. Although observations revealed that commB simultaneously experienced a *kóró* rush, perhaps because of the intensity of farming overall, schoolB teachers did not single it out as a parental functioning.

Though less frequently mentioned than farming, teachers also believed parents' interest in schooling was subverted by their interest in *isẹ ọwọ*. In addition to the two schoolB teachers' identification of *isẹ ọwọ* during the group interaction highlighted in 6.3.1, the schoolB HT mentioned it during a casual conversation – both these interactions occurred during fieldwork. However, in schoolA, though *isẹ ọwọ* – as a corollary of parents' uninterest in schooling – was mentioned by only two of eight individual interactions, it was salient. During a lengthy fieldwork interaction with the P5 teacher, he stated:

Ehnn, they [usually] go learn *isẹ ọwọ* or say we go and learn 'tailoring', the... 'mechanic'! The manual ones which is not 'real engineering' where it's like they're 'auxillary something' so that thing is very common in this environment! Even the children who are in secondary school, others when they have left school in the afternoon, s/he'll go the place of the *isẹ ọwọ* that s/he's learning. (2019/01/21)

Along with farming (*oko*) and handiwork (*isẹ ọwọ*), schoolB teachers believed parents valued spending money on *òde*⁸⁵ (i.e., occasions), a finding which resonates with Donkor (2010) who similarly found that Ghanaian teachers perceived parents preferred to spend on parties rather than schooling (see 3.3.1). During a casual conversation at follow-up, after I asked about a former P6 learner (Girlchild7) who still had not started junior secondary school (JSS) despite school having resumed two months prior, the schoolB HT remarked, "ehnn, are they not picking clothes [for *òde*] which is more than that?! They don't count it as anything is it, they don't count it as anything!" (Fieldnotes 2019/11/18). A few days later, during another casual conversation, she echoed the same sentiment, nothing that "so, our women now, it's *òde* that they hold as important, that they buy clothes, that they buy food, that they buy thing, that's what they value. We're raising (i.e., sending) children to school, that doesn't concern them!" (Fieldnotes 2019/11/22). Unlike schoolB, no schoolA teacher mentioned *òde* directly during an individual interaction; however, at

⁸⁵ An *òde* is a party or celebratory event such as weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals, titleship ceremonies, birthdays, and even electoral campaign events, among others, where women (and to a lesser degree, men) are requested to purchase selected printed fabric (by the celebrant as a way of generating funds), sew and wear it to the event. In addition, attendees (men and women) are expected to give money to celebrants. Though fabric purchasing is optional, it is accepted as a norm as *òdes* are reciprocal i.e., if I attend yours, I expect you to attend mine, purchase fabric and make at least a similar level of cash/in-kind contribution; moreover, many women incur debt to finance their *òde* participation given the frequency of *òdes* in *Ilorin* and nearby communities. Those who disparage the practice, but nevertheless attend, often express '*Ilorin* and *òde*!' whilst shaking their heads.

one morning assembly during fieldwork, teachers severely critiqued and punished nearly the entire P6 class who had skipped school to attend an *òde*, invoking parents' leniency and general lacklustreness toward schooling as the reason children had the temerity to behave as they did:

AssistantHT: Ah ha! That poor behavior is not good! That poor behaviour is not good! The space even allows, the space allows your lies (i.e., you have the audacity to lie)! Ahh, maybe it's indeed your parents because the space allows you!

P6Teacher: So who [else] will it be? It's indeed the parents!

AssistantHT: They're doing *ijo*⁸⁶ (i.e., occasion)! They're doing *ijo*, they now sat home! They didn't even bother!

ArabicTeacher: They weren't worried at all!

AssistantHT: They didn't say they should come that maybe when it's break o, that they, that we, that we don't go back (i.e., they didn't think to leave school after the break instead). [Another teacher murmured her agreement with the Assistant who becomes audibly angry, her voice rising to a shout] I don't understand now, who called you to *ijo*?! Ehnn?! Who called you? You won't respond!

ArabicTeacher: It's the parents!

.....

(2019/01/28)

In addition to farming, *isẹ ọwọ* and attending/spending on *òdes*, teachers mentioned two additional functionings of uninterested parents': early marriages (for children) and polygyny (for selves). Early marriage (particularly post-primary schooling) was evoked by schoolB teachers during both stages. During the follow-up visit, I consulted the HT to confirm the interpretation of a phrase Girlchild7 had uttered during an interaction a few days prior in which Girlchild7 revealed she had begun to learn *isẹ ọwọ*. I asked what she thought would be its benefit to her and she replied, 'so that I can use it to do well when I get to my place.' Although I suspected what 'my place' meant, the schoolB HT later confirmed she meant she was being prepared for her husband's house, as that was what her parents would be searching for rather than how to further her schooling. For schoolB teachers, early marriages in commB (and others like it) were not only for girls. One teacher narrated during a group interaction at follow-up:

⁸⁶ An *ijo* is loosely translated as 'association', which refers to a practice of age mate groupings often found in more rural areas among the *Yorùbás*. The associations are expected to meet periodically to discuss issues relevant to themselves and the community as well as attend and make group financial contributions to *òdes*. The term is moreover related to *ajo* which refers to savings groups often comprised of adults and whose members are expected to make periodic financial contributions towards savings or other goals. In the context of this dialogue, however, teachers used *ijo* synonymously with *òde* (I asked teachers at the assembly what *ijo* meant and they offered the English terms 'ceremony' and 'occasion').

P1Teacher (formerP6): They [the parents]’ll say, ‘you see this primary school like this-

P6: That’s it

P1: That’s six books in their own eyes-

P6: That’s what’s important

P1: The child who finishes secondary school, s/he has finished ten books, it’s as if s/he has finished university! In their own place (i.e., mind).

P6: Uhhh...they’ll get married!

...

P4 (formerP3): They’ll get married. The boys will get married, the girls will get married

...

P6: They’ll get him/her married is it! Marriage has come!

P4: Where I left, that child, ‘s/he was going to primary 6.’ When we took the ‘long vacation’, by the time we ‘resumed’ like this, they had done marriage for him/her. S/he had gotten married.

...

P4: S/he had gotten married

B: A child in primary 6?!

P4: Ehhh, going to six

B: Going to six even!

P4: Six! We now had ‘long vacation’. Then we ‘resumed’, when we resumed like this, that we arrived like this, go and call ‘X’, they have done marriage for him/her, s/he is married...uhhh...the same thing with girls also, when it’s like they have done...

B: So this one you’re talking about is a boy?

P4: It was a boy... (2019/11/20)

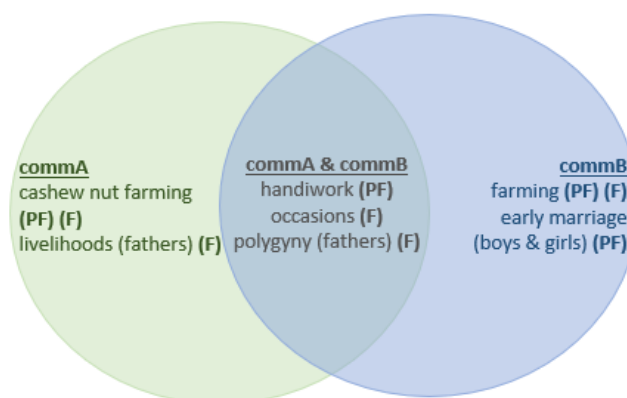
At schoolA, teachers believed the issue of early marriage emerged not because of parents’ uninterest in schooling, but as a result of poverty (this will be discussed further in the next sub-section). Interlinked with this view of poverty-induced early marriages was the perception that fathers were uninterested in schooling yet prided their ability to assemble wives (and, as a result, children) for whom they generally did little. This view was espoused repeatedly and with a fervency akin to that with which schoolB teachers asserted parents’ valuing and prioritization of farming. Of the eight individual interactions with schoolA teachers during fieldwork, four mentioned commA men’s high polygyny as a reason for their uninterest in schooling. To quantify the average number of wives, one teacher initially said ‘many’, subsequently specified three, and later noted four (P3 2019/01/28). Another offered, “but now that women are more than men, that one man marries five wives?” (P2 2019/01/25). One lamented that “the one who is not enough to marry one wife among them who marries two, who marries three...!” (P4 2019/02/18) while

KC2 retorted, “their men are not serious! And ‘the majority of them’ have four wives!” (PrincipalSSS_SchoolA 2019/02/19).

To note, two other male teachers – the outgoing schoolA HT (beginning of fieldwork) and an J/SSS teacher present during the interaction with KC2 – who mentioned commA fathers’ uninterest relative to mothers’ attributed it to men’s livelihoods which resulted in their physical absence from home for significant periods of time (though the J/SSS teacher did ultimately attribute it to polygyny). At schoolB during fieldwork, polygyny was lamented by a female teacher who admonished the men on the *oko* who ‘most especially’ did not pay attention to schooling not only because of their valuing of farming but also because they each married two or three wives. During a casual conversation at follow-up, the schoolB HT disclosed that on the *oko*, “what men value is that they gather together four or five wives, there’s nothing concerning them about [schooling], it’s for them to be feeling proud that I also have five of your type at home...” (Fieldnotes 2019/11/22). Evidently, fathers’ interest in assembling wives, as teachers often expressed it, was perceived as overriding their interest in schooling, and this view was more pervasive among schoolA teachers.

This sub-section has demonstrated that teachers’ perspectives of parents’ lack of interest in children’s schooling were framed by teachers’ views of what parents in each community did value, as illustrated below:

Figure 6.1 Teachers’ views on parents’ (F) and parental (PF) functionings



The functionings identified are further classified as parental functionings (PF) or parents’ functionings (F) (i.e., not on behalf of their children) or both where the functioning contributes directly and concurrently to both parent and child wellbeing (i.e., as a way for parents to earn income while also inculcating skills in the child, as is the case with [cashew nut] farming). To note, cashew nut farming is categorized separately from farming, given its seasonal and other peculiarities as discussed earlier. However, none of the functionings are specific to schooling suggesting that teachers believe parents generally do not value schooling. This and the conflation of parents’ functionings with parental ones – linking schooling

functionings to broader issues around parenting – echo teachers’ deficit narratives examined in the literature in **3.3**. The present discussion also suggests a hierarchy of functionings where handiwork and polygyny appear most valued in commA (with cashew nut farming, in its season, taking precedence over handiwork) while in commB, farming (a form of handiwork) is most valued and closely followed by other forms of handiwork.

The prioritization of farming in commB reflects the predominant livelihood in this more rural community, as discussed in **5.2**. Likewise, commA fathers’ prolonged absence from home and their extra-communal livelihoods which offer daily opportunities to meet both women and men, potentially contributes to their increased polygyny vis-à-vis commB. For instance, the female primary and secondary schoolA teachers who were originally from the city but were now married to commA fathers (and resident in commA) as second or third wives, met the fathers whilst they were driving or in their garages in town. Evidently, some of the functionings identified by teachers are gendered. This dimension is further explored next.

6.3.2. “There are no husbands...there are only children”

Teachers’ deficit views around fathers’ functioning of polygyny were intricately linked with their more empathetic views of mothers’ functioning of schooling as well as disproportionately higher struggles, not only for schooling but also for the general upkeep of children. Given polygyny is a norm within the *Yorùbá* Muslim research communities (as both a cultural and legal religious practice), teachers presented the assemblage of wives as problematic not because of their disapproval of it, but because, for them, the practice rendered husbands unable, and usually uninterested, in “carry[ing] the responsibilities” of the household. During fieldwork, schoolB teachers alleged that men “don’t pay attention to it (i.e., schooling),” and as such,

On the *oko*, sometimes, it’s the women who struggle that their children become ‘educated’. It’s the women who... the women...[they are] trying... those women, they want their children to go to school but there is usually no power (i.e., means) there. There is no power.” (P6Teacher 2019/02/05)

During follow-up, the HT contributed:

That’s the problem we have on the *oko*. The men don’t usually pay attention to them (i.e., mothers and children). Even we who have gone to school, especially in this our *Kwara*, those who have gone to school, if you want your child to become a person, it’s you the mother who will pull up your trousers! (Fieldnotes 2019/11/22).

At schoolA, teachers deplored commA fathers' polygyny and mothers' disproportionate struggles on my very first day in fieldwork as I sat beneath the gathering tree and casually spoke with two teachers about the study. They were among three female teachers who, in separate interactions, highlighted polygyny as a corollary for men's perceived lack of interest in schooling and admonished fathers whom they felt had bitten off more than they could chew. On the first day, one of them, the P3 teacher, asserted that polygynous fathers acted in the interest of greed, sin or peer imitation because they were assembling wives despite having nothing in their hands to take care of them (2019/01/28). The P4 teacher echoed this:

P4: It's plenty (i.e., largely) in the hands of the father. It's in the hands of the fathers that it is plenty. Because they don't want to do *anything*!

B: Uhnn...so why don't they want to do anything, is it that they don't have or they just don't want to...?

P4: They have but...the one...the one who is not enough to marry one wife among them who marries two, who marries three, those children are too much more than the money, the income which is coming in for them. They don't have the space (i.e., financial ability) to raise them.

B: Uhnn...so it's the mothers who it seems are carrying the responsibilities...?

P4: It's the mothers who are carrying the responsibilities. The one their arm is able to reach is not much. They themselves are just doing as their power, as their power is able. (2019/02/18)

The P2 teacher, after bemoaning fathers with five wives (see previous sub-section), mused about how polygyny has worsened over time:

You know all those times that, the person who had one wife, who had two wives, who had one child, who had two children, the power was carrying it. Now, that the children are many, that the wives are many...it's face your child, 'face yourrrr'...each person...the woman just faces the responsibilities of her children...the woman with the responsibilities of her children is it! And how many jobs can we women do that we can take care of children?! The power is not carrying it, it's that the power is not carrying it... (2019/01/25)

Illustrating with a commA mother (Mother9), the teacher disclosed, "like [*child's name*] that you've said you want to follow home today now, all her [mother's] children, they're all at this school. Those who graduated even, it's from here that they graduated. She wants to do, [but] she doesn't see money." One of the three male teachers in the previous sub-section (who spoke of men's polygyny and absence from home) elaborated:

The...mothers, given that they're many that they've married so each person is struggling for her child. And they'll have the extent to which their power can reach. Vegetables (*èfó*) is the major work that they're doing. Aahhh, how much [money] are they seeing there?! So that's what's causing the 'problem' that they don't see money... (2019/02/19)

For all these teachers, mothers did highly value schooling but their life contexts severely constrained their capability to pursue this parental functioning: fathers' polygyny and the resultant strain on family economic capital led to a neglect of fatherly responsibilities around schooling (and general provision). Thus, teachers believed many mothers were left on their own, with no one "to help" and no one "to assist" (P2 2019/01/25; P6&Arabic 2019/02/05; SchoolBTeachers 2019/11/20). The schoolA P3 teacher recounted interactions with commA mothers who, when asked to contribute towards the 2018 P6 graduation occasion, pleaded, "Ahhh! won't you help us reduce it?! We're also the husbands o, there are no men anywhere!" (2019/01/28). Like the KC2-solicited male teacher above who spoke of women's struggles, two others who walked into KC2's office to discuss administrative issues contributed similarly. One, a female married to a commA father (and resident in commA), contributed, "There are no husbands o....there are only children..." while the other, a male, retorted, "women are the men in this community, men are the women!" (2019/02/19). Interestingly, for two female teachers, one in each school, polygynous fathers' level of schooling had little effect (P2_SchoolA 2019/01/25; Fieldnotes 2019/11/22). For them, most polygynous but schooled fathers (e.g., post-primary or higher) abdicated their responsibilities like many of their unschooled polygynous peers, particularly if they continued to live amongst or maintained friendships with these peers.

Though the prevailing sense across both schools was that of polygynous abdication of responsibilities, some of the above excerpts also demonstrate that teachers perceived mothers' disproportionate struggles were exacerbated by mothers' livelihoods struggles and poverty. For instance, teachers reported commA mothers' livelihoods were so meagre that some did not have 20Naira (0.04£) to buy children hot meals in the morning and instead gave them cold, dense, yam flour (Fieldnotes 2018/11/28). Others were compelled to "for once take [their teenage daughters] to their husbands' houses" when they could no longer provide so that these husbands may assume their care (P2_SchoolA 2019/01/25). Thus, teachers believed the lack of assistance from polygynous fathers exposed and heightened mothers' poverty which led to highly constrained choices and actions even where mothers valued schooling. Under significant capability constraints, teachers believed mothers pursued measures of last resort rather than parental functionings.

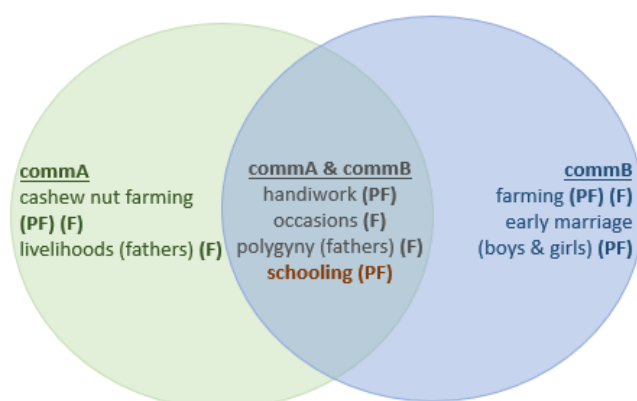
As alluded to by two teachers in the previous sub-section (and by another two female teachers: P2 and P3; all during fieldwork), compounding fathers' polygynous abdication of responsibilities in commA were their

livelihoods – transporters of goods and persons, short and long distances – which resulted in extended absences from home during daytime (depart at dawn and return after midnight) or for days or months at a time. Thus, for teachers, fathers neglected their responsibilities not only towards provision, but also availability (e.g., to participate in school-related activities).

Although teachers' general characterization of men in both communities was deficiently one of lack of interest in schooling, there were some exceptions. During fieldwork, the schoolB P4 teacher noted that though “the *oko* people are [generally] not interested in schooling, there are a few who are good among them [who] want to learn” (Fieldnotes 2019/01/16). At follow-up, the HT's conclusion that the school was “just forcing by force” parents' interest in schooling because parents “[were] not ready to do all those kinds of things” was preceded by the acknowledgement that there were “[those] who ‘understand’ in this place” such as *Father6* and *Father2* (Fieldnotes 2019/11/22). In commA, no such exceptions were acknowledged. However, KC2 offered a comparative view: commB parents (particularly fathers) were “serious” about schooling because they maintained a stronger collective existence and chose to pursue school/community relevant issues with greater communal agency (“joint effort”) while commA fathers' infighting resulted in greater pursuit of individual goals (Fieldnotes 2018/11/28). Furthermore, he thought it ironic that the serious commB parents were poor, while the unserious commA parents were less so: “have you seen the kinds of houses they are building here [in commA]?! Have you seen those in commB?!” As with mothers, poor commB fathers' capabilities were significantly constrained by the limitations on their economic resources.

Importantly, the current discussion has demonstrated that teachers believe schooling *is* a significant parental functioning, though one whose achievement is subject to the influence of the social space, particularly in terms of forms of capital and somewhat influenced by parents' gender. The previous illustration on functionings can be updated accordingly:

Figure 6.2 Teachers' views on parents' and parental functionings



This section has provided insights into teachers' perceptions of the range of parental and parents' valued and achieved functionings within their school communities, with the main findings teachers' deficit narratives of parents, particularly fathers, and their more empathetic views of mothers; the fervency with which teachers evoked specific functionings across each school (handiwork in schoolA; farming in schoolB); and the gendering of some functionings (fathers: polygyny, livelihoods; and mothers: schooling). In the next section, I examine teachers' perceptions of parental involvement with schooling through their everyday practices.

6.4. The capability space: Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement

This section deepens the exploration of the capability space begun in the previous, by examining teachers' perceptions of parents' everyday practices, as well as the choices and co-agency inherent in these practices. First, the section explores teachers' views on parents' current practices and sheds light on teachers' evaluative expectations. Then, it examines teachers' understandings of parental agency freedom around these perceived practices.

6.4.1. Teachers' understanding and expectations of parents' practices

Some of parents' everyday practices have been hinted at in the previous section, which revealed some of what teachers' perceptions of parents did and did not do regarding schooling. Other interactions expanded these perceptions, altogether outlined below (*items with no community in parenthesis elicited from both schools*):

Table 6.2 Teachers' views on parents' involvement practices

What parents were perceived to do	What parents were perceived not to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take children to private school (<i>commA</i>) take children to farm after school (<i>commB</i>) send children to hawk after school ask after absent teachers (<i>commB</i>) drop by to see HT (<i>commB</i>) marry off children early and/or enroll them in handiwork go confront teachers at school (e.g., over usage of corporal punishment for poor performance) (<i>commB</i>) send children to <i>ile kewu</i> (elementary Islamic school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give children good breakfast (<i>only commA</i>) attend PTA meetings (<i>commA fathers</i>) purchase adequate materials (e.g., exercise books) purchase uniforms (or mend those children already own) ask children, "what have you done today? Let me see your book. Go and ask your elder [sibling] if you don't understand." pay school PTA fees wash children's clothes strictly monitor children's school attendance (i.e., to dissuade truancy) prepare children in the morning (e.g., bathe, dress, etc.)

Unsurprisingly, what teachers perceived parents did not do revealed their expectations of what parents should do. These expectations are classified in **Table 6.3** using Barger et al. (2019)'s typology (**Figure 3.1**).

‘Data-generated typologies’ represent new categories analyzed from the data which expand the existing typology.

Table 6.3 Teachers’ expectations of parental involvement practices

BARGER ET AL. (2019)’s TYPOLOGY	
SCHOOL-BASED	HOME-BASED
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visit school to check children’s attendance and discuss performance Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend PTA meetings when scheduled 	Discussion and Encouragement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask children what was taught in school incentivize children’s performance with rewards visit school to check children’s attendance and make children happy (i.e., that their parents are visiting them) Cognitive Intellectual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> check children’s books hire home lesson teacher provide light breakfast (so children don’t sleep in class) Involvement in Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask children for assignment and check/guide children’s work at home (unschooled parents should pretend) provide time for children to review / do assignment instruct elder siblings (or neighbours) to help with schoolwork
DATA-GENERATED TYPOLOGIES	
SCHOOL-BASED	HOME-BASED
Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make financial contribution to school provide meals or money for break time provide children with school materials (e.g., complete uniform & badge, textbooks, exercise books, pencils/pens, school bags, etc.) provide children with complete school uniform (girls: hijab & dress; boys: shorts & shirt; school badge) and accessories (white socks, sandals) pay PTA and other fees (e.g., craft, graduation party, exam & certificate, etc.) provide materials for environmental cleanup day (girls: broom; boys: cutlass) 	Attendance & Punctuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure child attendance and punctuality manage children’s morning schedule (i.e., so chores do not delay them) School preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure clean & neat children (i.e., bathe children, provide clean uniform, ensure plaited/barded hair, ensure trimmed nails, ensure appropriate underwear, etc.) monitor children’s overall appearance manage children’s chores schedule (i.e., so chores do not overburden/fatigue/prevent them)

The data-generated typologies are defined as:

School-based:

- Provision** – parents’ financial and in-kind provision for schooling especially fees, school uniform, school writing supplies, school-requested supplies (e.g., brooms by girls; cutlass for boys), etc.

Home-based:

- Attendance & Punctuality** – parents’ actions to ensure children’s punctuality (e.g., chore management) and monitor truancy.
- School preparedness** – parents’ actions to ensure children’s bodies are clean; children wear clean, appropriate and adequate uniform to school (including socks and shoes); children have an overall ‘neat’ appearance; and to manage chores so children are not exhausted, or prevented from school.

For one schoolB teacher, the myriad expectations represented ways parents could cooperate and collaborate with teachers towards children’s school learning. For the rest, they represented ideal practices

which, carried out consistently and completely, enabled achievement of the parental functioning of schooling and ultimately demonstrated to teachers that parents indeed valued schooling.

Notably, unlike parents' verbal expressions of aspirations, values and expectations (AVEs) identified in the literature (3.2), teachers' desired demonstration of 'value' was physical and tangible: parents should 'cheer children up'; 'care about', 'value', 'motivate' and 'encourage' children's learning through tangible acts of provision, asking about school day, and school preparedness, among others. The emphasis on *school preparedness*, particularly hygiene, fulfilled a few purposes. One, a clean and neat learner was protected from infections and other diseases that may arise due to poor hygiene. Two, such a child was visibly recognized as a 'child who goes to school' not only by teachers but by others within the community. This recognition contributed to a learner's identity (i.e., the 'identity of the schooled') and for teachers, was a source of pride for parents. Three, a clean, neat and punctual child was more likely to be titled head girl/boy, an additional source of enduring pride for both children and parents. In commA, one of the fathers I could not interview due to his absence during daytime was called 'headboy', a nod to his status as the first headboy of schoolA even though he did not progress beyond primary school. Although the correlation between teachers' expectations and learners' achievement was not explicitly examined, prefect appointments and field observations of teachers' commendations of clean, neat, and adequately uniformed children suggest as Lareau & Weininger (2003) argue, that these expectations serve an evaluative purpose. Next, I discuss teachers' perceptions of parents' agency and choices.

6.4.2. Teachers' perceptions of parental agency freedom

Teachers' perception of parents' actions and their expectations of parents sheds light on their perception of parental agency, including parents' choices. As explained in 3.4, an evaluation of agency requires an examination of agency freedom and agency achievement, the former including (a) an assessment of available and accessible options and (b) choices. Similar to Buckler (2016) who uses a questions-based framework to assess teachers' agency, these three dimensions of agency are here reframed as questions, with responses representing teachers' general perceptions of parents' opportunities, choices and achievements around the practices typologized in **Table 6.3**. However, unlike Buckler (2016) who includes choice in agency achievement, choice here is included as part of agency freedom given, as already demonstrated (3.4), Sen's expanded view of freedom.

Moreover, because the data here is primarily qualitative; and practices are recurrent (i.e., achievement is continuous) and represent samples rather than the 'complete' list of parental functionings or capabilities, responses do not always correspond to a dualistic yes or no, particularly those to perceived choices. Thus, agency freedom (b) responses are analyzed using commonly applied levels of a frequency Likert scale:

never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always while the other two dimensions are analyzed using a *yes, no* or *partly*. The question format remains the same for each practice type so only questions for the first two types are indicated in the table to avoid redundancy.

Table 6.4 Teachers' views on parental agency freedom and achievement

Everyday practice	Agency Freedom (a) <i>Is this option available to parents?</i>	Agency Freedom (b) <i>Do parents choose to pursue this option?</i>	Agency Achievement <i>Is this option being (or has this option been) achieved?</i>
School-based practices			
Participation • visit school to check children's attendance and discuss performance	Can parents visit schools to check children's attendance and discuss performance? <i>Yes – parents live near schools and schools have open policies</i>	Do parents choose to visit schools? <i>Sometimes</i>	Are (or to what extent are) parents visiting schools? <i>No</i>
Governance • attend PTA meetings when scheduled	Can parents attend PTA meetings when scheduled? <i>Yes (fathers who work outside can make exceptions)</i>	Do parents choose to attend PTA meetings...? <i>Rarely (commA fathers) Sometimes (commA mothers) Often (commB – both parents)</i>	Are (to what extent are) parents attending PTA...? <i>No (commA fathers) Partly (commA mothers) Partly (commB – both parents)</i>
Provision	<i>No/yes – some parents don't have; others have and spend on other things</i>	<i>Sometimes – many don't; some try</i>	<i>No</i>
Home-based practices			
Discussion & Encouragement	<i>Yes – through tangible acts of care</i>	<i>Rarely (with few exceptions)</i>	<i>No</i>
Cognitive Intellectual	<i>Yes (through intermediaries)</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>No</i>
Involvement in Homework	<i>Yes (through intermediaries)</i>	<i>Rarely (for commB pre-primary parents, became sometimes at follow-up)</i>	<i>No (for commB pre-primary parents, became yes at follow-up)</i>
Attendance & punctuality	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>No</i>
School preparedness	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>No</i>

Unsurprisingly, the above analysis implies that teachers generally believed that while nearly all involvement practices are available to and accessible by parents, parents do not often choose to pursue, and therefore do not achieve, them.

Perceptions of parental agency around *participation* and *governance* reiterated earlier views of commA fathers' abdication of responsibilities given, among others, their absence at PTA meetings. While schoolB teachers felt commB parents often choose to *participate* and attend school *governance* meetings, schoolA teachers reported commA fathers rarely do, as "it's the women who 'turn up' the most" (HT_SchoolA 2019/01/14). For some teachers, there was a geographical (i.e., urbanizational) dimension to *participation* and *governance*. SchoolB's P6 and Arabic teachers felt the school's rurality and its afforded proximity to school created opportunities for involvement, noting that parents in town had neither the time nor possibility to come to school to 'confront' teachers as some commB parents did because many parents in town live far away from their children's schools.

For most teachers, parents' real constraints (i.e., of options) only occurred around *provision* where, as already demonstrated, teachers in both schools admitted many parents simply do not possess the economic resources to convert to provide school fees, materials, etc. Such parents who then express a value for and choose to pursue schooling struggle to realize it despite their pursuits. However, teachers also believed there were few parents who could provide but who chose not to. The inclusion of *òdes* (occasions) (see 6.3) encapsulates teachers' beliefs that there were parents who do possess some resources but rather than convert them to children's schooling, choose instead to convert them towards socially prioritized practices.

A geographical dimension was also evident in schoolB P4 and schoolA P6 teachers' views that parents rarely asked or *discussed* with children what they had done at school. These were framed by views of more urban parents in town whom teachers believed did the opposite. Teachers perceived similarly low parental agency towards *cognitive intellectual* and *involvement in homework*. Particularly regarding homework, most schoolA teachers maintained that their learners do not do their homework at home while for schoolB teachers, KG children do no homework while upper primary learners do theirs in the classroom in the morning because they went to the farm or went to learn *isè ɔwɔ* after school (recall 6.3.1). An exception to these was the schoolA KG teacher who, during the follow-up visit, reported a significant increase in homework completion and another schoolA teacher who noted her children sometimes do their homework after their after-school activities such as hawking or *ilé kéwú*. Notably, teachers acknowledged parents do not have the educational resource (i.e., knowledge through schooling experience) to pursue *cognitive intellectual* and *involvement in homework*. However, they asserted that parents can (and are aware that they can) use elder children as proxies – who can convert their own educational resources to support younger siblings – to pursue these practices, but they rarely choose to.

Though overall teachers felt parents do not often choose to pursue *attendance & punctuality* and *school preparedness*, a dimension of temporality was also evident, across both schools, in the reported positive changes over time around these practices. For schoolB's P6 and Arabic teachers, who had each been at the school for more than eight years, they no longer had to go call children at home:

ArabicT: There's a difference, there's a difference very well, a lot! Part of the difference is that the children before, before, at one time, before they come to school in the morning like this, we'll be chasing them, we'll be sending someone to them at home that ahh, there is school today, come. Now it's even, you see when you get there [parents would say], "my children, my children are coming, they went to break cassava, they went to break cassava [on the farm] is it!" At one time. "They went to break cassava o, they're coming!"

P6: The day we resume, when we just resume, when we just enter a new term-

ArabicT: -When we've just resumed school, two, two, two weeks, they won't come to school

P6: We'll just then be going everywhere all the surroundings that "we have entered o, we have entered o," now! [laughs]

ArabicT: We'll then be ringing, we'll then be ringing the bell...

P6: We'll then be ringing the bell like we're especially at the market, at the [five-day] market

ArabicT: They'll be announcing it, the parents, the parents, the parents, they'll be helping us announce for them!

P6: Ehnn! We'll go and be telling them that the school children have resumed...that we have resumed o, we have resumed o! All the surroundings one by one here too like [*Father6's village*], *Village X*, I have, we have, I have gone before! Where it's that we'll be telling them that we have resumed o, we have resumed o!

ArabicT: Learning ('*ḥkḥ*') has begun o!

P6: Learning ('*ḥkḥ*') has begun o...but now, once they see that the bosses (teachers) are coming...

(P6&Arabic 2019/02/05)

At schoolA, the P6 teacher recounted improvements in *school preparedness* since she began three years prior:

...there are changes o. Ahhh, no! There are changes! Uhnnn, but it's not like how one wants. Ehnn ehnn! So... are the kids wearing shoes now? Their clothes are clean a little, a little? [laughs] And they are wearing socks? God has done it! (2019/01/22).

These positive changes were, according to teachers, the result of their collective [disciplinary] action (schoolA) and persistent advocacy and sensitization (schoolB).

The data suggest teachers also recognize children's co-agency, though to varying degrees and for fewer practices. For instance, schoolB's HT appeared to accord greater recognition to children's co-agency than the heads of schoolA. A recurrent theme at schoolB's daily morning assembly was the HT's advice to children to assume responsibility for their own *school preparedness*, particularly hygiene. One morning, she advised, "when you get home, tell our parents, if they say what are you doing? Tell them you want to wash your school uniforms!" (2019/02/01). SchoolA's assemblies occurred less often, two instances of which were illustrated in **6.3.1**. The first, which discussed children's uncleanness and began with the Assistant HT admonishing dirty-clothed children whom she instructed to wash their clothes, ended with teachers who interjected that the cause was parental neglect. However, both schools recognized children's co-agency regarding *attendance & punctuality*, although this recognition was also greater at schoolB.

This section has shed some light on teachers' perceptions of parental agency around diverse forms of schooling involvement, including their expectations. The next section explores teachers' perceptions of the social space, and its interconnectedness with parents' values and practices.

6.5. The social space and the capability space

The previous sections have explored the capability space, examining what teachers believe parents value and do in relation to schooling. This section brings them all together to explore what teachers believe influences these values and practices, and how teachers arrived at these views.

6.5.1. Teachers' perceptions of the influences on parental functionings and agency

The study's conceptual framework (3.6) posits that within social fields, objective structures, habitus and forms of capital underpin what social agents value. The data suggest teachers believe parental functionings are determined by the intersection of parents' durable dispositions and, as already shown, their resources, within a context of broader economic and political structures. The perception of the influence of habitus is evident in teachers' repeated descriptions of parents as *ará oko* (i.e., those of the farm) (see 6.3.1); their rural non-schooling values (e.g., farming, early marriage, handiwork and elementary Islamic schooling); and their juxtaposition of rural and urban parental functionings and capabilities (see 6.4), highlighting a common deficit trope of rural people's limited knowledge or understanding of schooling vis-à-vis their urban counterparts. As the schoolA P6 teacher concluded when asked about her knowledge of the parents of her learners:

But you know it 'means' that the 'local area' that we're at is what is making me say, it's 'better'. If it was a place that was even more 'civilized', ahhhhh, I'd say no! Maybe 50% or 40%. But 'mean that' the 'local area' that we're at, you know, it has 'affected' them, 'so that's just it'. It has 'affected' them so.... I've seen it that it seems like they don't all that have....ehnnn...what can I call it, they don't...let me just say that maybe they don't have any 'knowledge' about 'education'.
(2019/01/22)

Although teachers generally acknowledged their communities comprised both schooled and unschooled parents, some reported there was a higher proportion of the latter which resulted in their disproportionate influence, particularly through their values. At schoolB, buttressing her example of the father who habitually came to beat his child in school to take him to the farm (see 6.3.1), the P6 teacher noted that when the child's class teacher tried to plead with the father to consider the child's future and therefore leave him at school, the father replied, "no, no, no, no! What we'll eat [today] is the senior of (i.e., takes

priority over) what we'll become!" (2019/02/05). This scenario was so engrained in the teacher's mind that she repeated it during the follow-up visit. Except *òdes*, polygyny and to a lesser extent *isè ɔwɔ* which have also become pervasive in urban areas, for teachers, farming (including cashew nut farming) and early marriages are what *ará oko* people do and are reproduced under the social influence of rural norms inculcated (inevitably) as a result of sustained rural residence.

In addition to those whose rural habitus predispose a lack or limited valuing of schooling, teachers believed economic constraints compel those who do value schooling to adapt their parental functionings based on a realistic assessment of what they are likely to achieve. This assessment inheres an evaluation of current capital – the resources to be converted to achieve functionings – and the broader structures which would enable not only the achievement of schooling but its utilization to realize instrumental aims such as employment. For many teachers, protracted unemployment (see 2.2) is a macroeconomic challenge which contributes to parental adaptive preferences. As explained by the P5 teacher who in 6.3.1 highlighted the ubiquity of *isè ɔwɔ* in comma:

...and what has led them (i.e., parents) to it? It's how our country is, is it! Because another one might read now (i.e., go to school), if you have certificate, 'you, you won't be able to get job, even four years, three years, you won't...What am I even saying, which four years?! Even ten years! The graduates! I have elder graduates who are, like the brother of my friend or one who is even my own brother, more than seven years now or eight years that he's finished serving, he still hasn't secured any work so this is how the country is, but another person who has 'vocational work' that they're learning or any...at least s/he can be using it to...and others have family... (2019/01/21)

For him and other teachers, many parents perceive their children cannot immediately or easily access a "threshold level of welfare" through schooling; thus, some trade it off for something else to achieve this minimum welfare (Khader, 2013, p. 318). The other key structural challenge was evoked by the same P5 teacher: government's nonchalance in 'upgrading' the public education system – whose physical environment (e.g., crumbling infrastructure and lack of facilities) he rated 'not even conducive for learning' – demotivates parents who might otherwise value, and struggle to achieve, schooling for their children.

The conceptual framework also suggests that within fields, objective structures, habitus, and forms of capital influence what social agents do. The aforementioned structures and resources (or lack thereof) also operate in the intervals within capability space. As alluded, teachers believed some parents, due to national/state macroeconomic conditions and governance structures, have adapted their preferences to other functionings such as *isè ɔwɔ*, and therefore choose to pursue these instead of schooling through their everyday practices. Some with few resources were believed to prioritize and pursue social activities

like *òdes*, while others who retained a valuing of schooling but who possess limited economic capital, compounded by challenging life contexts, were perceived constrained in their capability to meaningfully pursue and realize it. Many among the latter, teachers acknowledged, were compelled to engage children in economic activities such as hawking to contribute to the household economy.

These findings suggest teachers perceive three reasons for limited parental agency around schooling: constrained choices due to (1) *constrained pursuits* and (2) *forced trade-offs adaptive preferences*; and (3) *lack or limited valuing of schooling*. For teachers across both communities, except for a handful of parents, most parents in their school-communities fall into category three. Notably, children's co-agency, for teachers, appeared to play a relatively marginal role in the achievement of schooling as agency was generally attributed to parents. Next, I discuss how teachers arrived at these perceptions.

6.5.2. Influences on teachers' perceptions

The data suggest two main reasons underpin teachers' detailed views of parents: teachers' accrued knowledge of communities, assisted by their ethno-religious similarities; and female teachers' personal experiences of polygyny. First, like the school-communities, all teachers were *Yorùbá* and, except two who were Christian (one in each school), all were Muslim. Moreover, as shown in **Appendix C**, some teachers had spent considerable years in their schools. For instance, the schoolA P2 teacher had spent 18 years in schoolA while at schoolB, there were three teachers who had spent at least eight years. Thus, teachers' tenures in schools, aided by their broadly shared culture and religion, facilitated the accumulation of considerable knowledge of school-communities, including of parents and children. This knowledge was also often shared in casual conversations before, during and after school. Where teachers had less spent less time in schools, their knowledge of communities was deepened by residence in and near communities. This was more common in commA, where four female teachers were either residents of commA or adjacent communities (e.g., the P2 teacher). At schoolB, the HT had only been at the school for two years during fieldwork; however, her residence a short drive away and ability to forge relationships with parents outside of school (i.e., at the market, at *òdes*, etc.) deepened her knowledge of commB. The schoolB P6 teacher's deep knowledge was also enhanced by her residence near commB – the same town as the HT.

Second, teachers' personal lives appeared to influence their perspectives. In particular, female teachers who themselves were in polygynous households were quick to reprimand fathers who liked to assemble wives with little or nothing in hand. Except the P6 teacher, the other four female schoolA teachers were from polygynous households (see **Appendix C**). Of these, three veiled their references with their admonition of polygynous men. The fourth, after disclosing there was "no assist" from her husband, cited her stepson who, though not yet 30 years old and pursuing a meagre livelihood as a transporter, already

had three wives and nine children. The J/SSS female teacher who, during the interaction with KC2, declared there were “no husbands, only children” was also from a polygynous household in commA. At schoolB, the HT made a thinly veiled allusion to her polygynous household experiences when she spoke of her singular efforts to send her girl child to school despite the female neighbours and co-wives who mocked these efforts. In no small way, female teachers’ lived experiences of polygyny enabled a lucid articulation of the association between polygyny (particularly in commA) and mothers’ constrained choices. Given the highly personal and sensitive nature of these (sometimes veiled) disclosures (as well as the act of recording our interactions), I did not ask teachers to detail these experiences. However, much of teachers’ thinly veiled references were corroborated during casual conversations in schools.

This section has discussed the influence of the social space – field structures, forms of capital and habitus – on the capability space, including on value formation and pursued practices. The final section of this chapter discusses these findings and draws some conclusions.

6.6. Chapter discussion and conclusion

This chapter has responded to the first research question by examining teachers’ varied perspectives on parental functionings and involvement within their school-communities. It has revealed that teachers across both schools largely believed parents do not value schooling because of rural dispositions towards values such as early marriage, farming and handiwork. Such perspectives resonate with the literature’s dominant deficit narratives discussed in 3.3. The chapter also found that teachers acknowledged some parents do value schooling but believed such parents are constrained in their ability to choose and pursue relevant practices to achieve it. This view uncovered teachers’ gendered perspectives in two ways. First, because fathers across both communities (though to a greater extent, commA) were perceived to highly value polygyny, constraining mothers’ capabilities to secure children’s schooling by heightening mothers’ poverty due to the reduction in the share of family capital. Second, because female teachers who themselves were in polygynous households particularly excoriated polygynous fathers whom they believed abdicated their household responsibilities.

As demonstrated in 3.3, other studies have connected parents’ constrained choices with parents’ difficult life contexts such as poverty and household dynamics (e.g., Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Singh et al., 2004; Tucker et al., 2008; etc.). However, only a few have demonstrated teachers’ identification of these linkages (e.g., Buckler, 2012; Donkor, 2010; Kimu & Steyn, 2013) or their broader connection to polygyny (e.g., Donkor, 2010). Where such intersections are identified, as with Donkor (2010), there is no real attempt to further interrogate them or link perceptions with teachers’ own lives. Such deep nuances are absent in the extant literature which largely assumes that teachers, particularly rural ones, have little in common with rural

school-communities. An exception is Buckler (2012) who suggests that teachers' own rural backgrounds facilitate empathy with rural lives and that teachers who hold close personal relationships with school-communities have functionings that align with those school-communities. However, the findings of this chapter suggest that this empathy is deepened when teachers' personal life experiences are similar to those of school-communities (and where teachers are aware of these) whether or not teachers have similar rural backgrounds or close personal relationships with communities. Thus, teachers' apparently deficit views of parents are simultaneously underpinned by empathy which arises from teachers' abilities to metaphorically walk a mile in parents' shoes.

Consequently, teachers' empathy manifested in affective relationships with learners. Reports of recurrent purchases of pens, exercise books, food and snacks for children at both schools were corroborated by similar observations. Teachers also spoke of the need to counsel and be jovial with children given the difficult circumstances characteristic of much of children's home lives. This affect was particularly strong in schoolB where it was mentioned by all teachers, most of whom were observed playing and joking with children. Likewise, the singing and marching/dancing at the schoolB morning assembly (observed on numerous mornings), the HT revealed, was critical to achieving this affective goal. Teachers' empathetic and affective practices also extended to parents. For example, the HT distributed snacks to parents after parent-teacher meetings and operated an open office whereby [grand]parents ambled in to at will to discuss or seek a listening ear on issues which often went beyond their children's schooling. Fewer instances of such practices were mentioned or observed at schoolA during fieldwork and this may have been largely due to its leadership instability because, during follow-up, the new HT had begun to try to create a similar atmosphere.

Teachers' empathy was also evident in HTs' leniency around school fees. At schoolB, action to collect outstanding fees consisted of daily reminders at the morning assembly. Sometimes, few children stepped out to pay 10, 20, 50 or 100Naira out of the 450Naira term fee. Mostly, many paid nothing. At schoolA, children were occasionally sent home to collect fees but expected to immediately return to school to report parents' responses. Most children returned with pleas for leniency and promises of payment. Unlike Fertig (2012) who argues that school heads' agency to achieve social justice goals may require external stimulus, like Bucker (2012), these acts demonstrate that rural teachers' perspectives and actions are organic and intertwined with their understanding of the realities of their school-communities. They also suggest that HTs are an important element of positive school-community perceptions and relationships which may support parents' involvement in schooling and shape children's learning.

Finally, the chapter found that teachers' understanding of parental involvement is linked to their perspectives of parents' and parental functionings and sometimes framed geographically (what rural

parents do versus what parents do) and temporally (what parents used to do and what parents do now). Unsurprisingly, teachers' expectations of involvement practices merely restated their beliefs of what parents do not do and the use of Barger et al. (2019)'s typology to frame these revealed additional practices of *provision*; *school preparedness*; and *attendance & punctuality*. These new categories suggest that in contexts with a shorter history of and experience with European-style schooling, such basic schooling practices are not yet commonplace and can therefore not be assumed to occur, as the original typology's omission of them implies.

Ultimately, this chapter has demonstrated that rural schools' perceptions of the parents of their learners cannot be presumed uniform or unequivocally deficit as the literature currently overwhelmingly does. The ethnographic data, analyzed using a capability-Bourdieuian lens, shows how rural teachers' perceptions of parents are varied, nuanced and strongly influenced by their perceptions of rurality; personal life experiences; accumulated knowledge of school-communities; and the prevailing macroeconomic condition whose effects are felt not only by parents, but also by teachers. In the next chapter, parents speak for themselves and provide their own perspectives around schooling.

Proverb 2. Character begins at home

Ilé la tí n kẹsọ́ rọ̀de

– It is from the home we take the character outside (proper training or character begins at home). (*Father5commA* & *Father2commB*).

Chapter 7. Parental perspectives on schooling

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored parents' perspectives and practices from teachers' points of view. The present one turns the gaze on parents to amplify their voices while responding to the second research question which asks, '*What are the perspectives, on schooling, of parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in Kwara state?*' First, it illuminates the ethnotheories – cultural beliefs underpinning the organization of children's everyday lives – which underpin and reveal what parents value (i.e., capability space). Then, it explores key themes around parents' perspectives on schooling, parents' understanding of what happens in schools, their assessment of children's school learning, and their role construction. Like the previous, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

7.2. Data sources

To examine parents perspectives in-depth, 103 interactions involving more than 100 additional communal contributors⁸⁷ (see **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**) along with extensive unrecorded casual conversations and participant observations across commA and commB were analyzed. These included 97 individual/communal interactions (53 commA, 47 in commB) and six group interactions (primarily commB PTA meetings), featuring 22 core [grand]parent participants (10 commA and 12 commB). **Table 7.1** illustrates the number of participants in individual and group interactions across the two stages of data generation (some participants recur in group interactions). Notably, the children's sample is included here illustratively – their data are analyzed as part of **Chapter 8**.

Table 7.1 Number of individual/communal and group interactions

	CommA				CommB				Total
	<i>Fathers</i>	<i>Mothers*</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Fathers*</i>	<i>Mothers*</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	
Individual	18	30	2	3	28	5	6	5	97
Group				2	3**	1**			6
Total	18	30	2	5	31	6	6	5	103

**Includes 1 commA and 1 commB grandmother; and 2 commB grandfathers; **mixed groups (separated for ease of calculation)*

Parents' perspectives were generally aligned across both communities; as such, their findings are discussed concurrently and differences highlighted where they emerge. As will be seen, perspectives were also shared, despite differences in parents' levels of schooling. The next section begins with the ethnotheories that underpin parents' perspectives.

⁸⁷ See, again, 5.4.1.

7.3. The capability space: Parental ethnotheories of learning

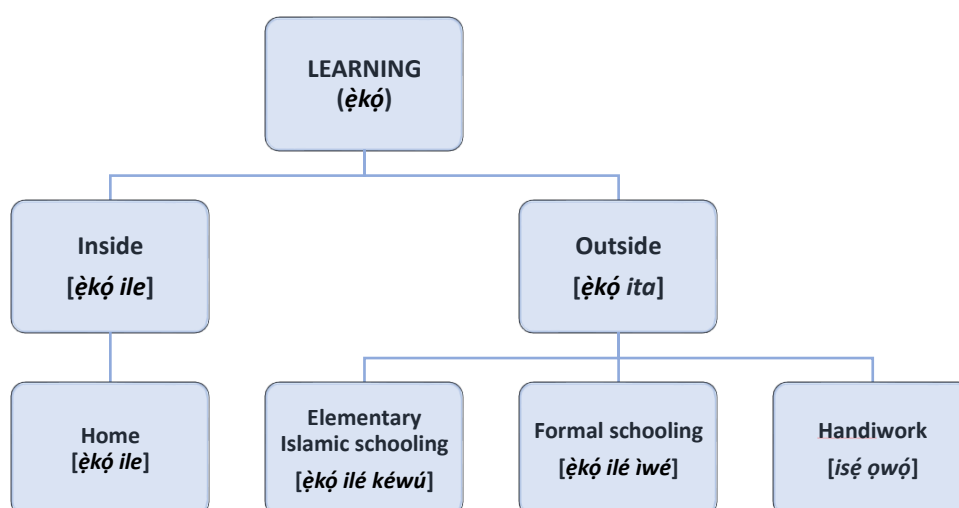
When parents were asked why they wanted their children to go to school (*ilé ìwé* or *ilé èkó* i.e., “the house of books” or “the house of learning”), they all replied it was because they wanted children to *kọ èkó* where *èkó* literally means “learning” or “to learn” and is often conventionally used to refer to “schooling” (hence, *ilé èkó*). To further unpack what parents meant, parents were asked to clarify what they hoped children might *learn* at school. Their responses revealed their ethnotheories. Specifically, parents articulated a complex conceptualization of *èkó* as holistic and constitutive of multiple, mutually reinforcing elements, only one of which was *èkó ilé ìwé* (schooling or school learning), the others being *èkó ilé* (home learning), *èkó ilé kéwú* (elementary Islamic schooling), and *isẹ ọwọ* (handiwork). *Èkó ilé ìwé*, *èkó ilé kéwú*, and *isẹ ọwọ* together constitute *èkó ita* because they occur outside the home. For parents, therefore, learning is a broad field within which exists the fields of *èkó ilé*, *èkó ilé kéwú*, *èkó ilé ìwé* and *isẹ ọwọ*.

In *èkó ilé*, parents teach children how to take care of their bodies, the home and the natural environment (i.e., through domestic work); how to run errands; how to behave (i.e., respect and discipline); and how to relate appropriately with others in society, particularly those of age or titular/positional seniority (in essence, how to become an *Ọmọlúàbí* and thereby build social and cultural capital). In other words, *èkó ilé* is the unstructured, informal learning that occurs in everyday life (Council of Europe, n.d.). *Èkó ilé kéwú* is taught by Islamic teachers (*Ààfáàs*) who teach recitation of the Quran in Arabic (*kéwú*) so that children may know how to pray effectively and, where desired, progress further in their Islamic studies. *Èkó ilé ìwé* is taught by schoolteachers who teach children how to *ka [i]wé*, or “read book” and write in *Yorùbá* and English as well as teach other subjects whose acquisition is expected to lead to future [usually] salaried employment. While *èkó ilé ìwé* is a structured, institutionalized (i.e., formal) system of learning offered by the public education system, *èkó ilé kéwú* (typically and that offered in both research communities) is less so, offering greater flexibility for learners to determine their attendance and holiday schedules (though, like schooling, its content is pre-determined).

Master craftspersons of *isẹ ọwọ* across both communities teach a skill, craft or trade which, once mastered, may be used by the child/youth to generate income, i.e., through self-employment. *Isẹ ọwọ* is a system of informal apprenticeship, the latter defined by the International Labour Office (2012, p. x) as the system through which “a young learner (apprentice) acquires the skills for a trade or craft in a micro- or small enterprise learning and working side by side with an experienced craftsperson.” Notably, informal or traditional apprenticeships have always existed among *Yorùbás*, like many other groups in Africa, where children acquired skills in trades, crafts, and other professions from parents, relatives, or other highly skilled masters (Obidi, 1995).

Evidently, these conceptualizations are also spatial. Unlike *ẹkọ ilé* which occurs inside the home and is the responsibility of parents who are the *teachers* within the home, the others take place outside the home and are taught by the relevant teachers within their domains. Each of these different spheres of learning plays its role in the formation of a faith-filled, functional adult who is independent (i.e., can sustain him/herself), contributes to his/her community (including immediate and extended families) and generally lives a *life of ease* (e.g., of contentment, satisfaction and moderation). Though teachers weren't asked about their ethnotheories, the schoolA assistant HT (AHT)'s teachers as the 'nanny' mothers remark in 6.3.1 suggests some might agree with at least some of these views, particularly that of *ẹkọ ilé* as the domain of parents. The below diagram illustrates the ethnotheories explained above:

Figure 7.1 Parental ethnotheories of learning



7.3.1. Desired learning capabilities for children

While parents refused to hierarchize these different forms of learning, noting they were all useful and none was more useful than the other, further probing revealed parents' prioritization of home learning. For instance, all parents agreed *ẹkọ ilé* was indispensable as it underpinned and was a prerequisite for the other forms of learning. One commB father noted, "If a child doesn't have home learning, s/he can't have that of outside, s/he can't find that of outside" (Father6commB 2018/12/10). Another in commA reflected:

Both of them are good but that of the beginning is, that of the home, in my own view, more important than...You know, even if a child doesn't go to school, if s/he has *ẹkọ ilé*, and it's that his/her parent wasn't able to raise him (i.e., send him to school), uhnn? S/he'll [still] be able to be doing good (or well) in society. (Father6commA 2018/12/10)

Two commA fathers (Father5 and Father8) believed teachers pay greater attention to children with *ẹkọ ilé*, increasing the efficacy of such children's learning. Father8 explained:

...that monitoring by parents in the home is very important for the child before s/he'll now be learning *ẹkọ ita*...whatever s/he learns as *ẹkọ ilé* even if a little bit, will help him/her because if s/he has respect for his/her teacher, the teacher will also say, this child is a real child, even if [the child] wants to say s/he doesn't want to do well, if [the teacher] has seen [the child's] behaviour, s/he'll say, ahh, this one, s/he's responsible...[and] will also then keep an eye on him/her differently... (2018/12/18)

Ẹkọ ilé was also important because of the potentially negative future implications of its absence. One commB mother (who resides outside commB but whose children are under the guardianship of Grandparents8commB to support the elderly grandparents) narrated a cautionary tale of a child who suffered a disability from childhood because his mother did not take a [coconut palm] broom from him when he was playing with it as a toddler (Mother8commB 2019/02/11). The broom eventually pricked his eye, blinding him. As the story unfolds, during a discussion with his mother one day, the now-adult accused his mother of destroying his life and she expressed her regret, telling him that when she took the broom away from him, he cried so she gave it back. At this point in the narrative, Mother8commB turned to me and asked rhetorically, "have you [ever] seen a child who was crying and who then died?! From tears alone?!"

Moreover, it was evident that for these Muslim parents, *ẹkọ ilé kéwú* was also highly important. For a child to know how to pray and gain knowledge about Islam, the parent must send him/her to *ilé kéwú*, the only place where such learning may be acquired (Father4commB 2019/02/12). This explanation was elicited with the photograph of the commB mosque, taken on behalf of Father4:

Figure 7.2 The commB mosque



Another commB father argued:

...as *kéwú* is, if a child learns *korani*⁸⁸ now, and his parents did not, and his mother did not, it's useful for all of them like that. The grace of that *korani* that my child has learned, it's grace, if it becomes that, the *Malaika* (angel) are asking [on Islamic judgement day] that amongst all of you, who went to *èkọ ilé kéwú*? Amongst all of you, who learned *korani*? It's the child who will be all your saving grace.... why *kéwú* is more than *ìwé*, we cannot use *ìwé* to *kírun* (i.e., pray). Ehnn? We cannot use *ìwé* to *kírun*! We cannot use use *ìwé* to *kírun*.... (Father5commB 2019/11/19)

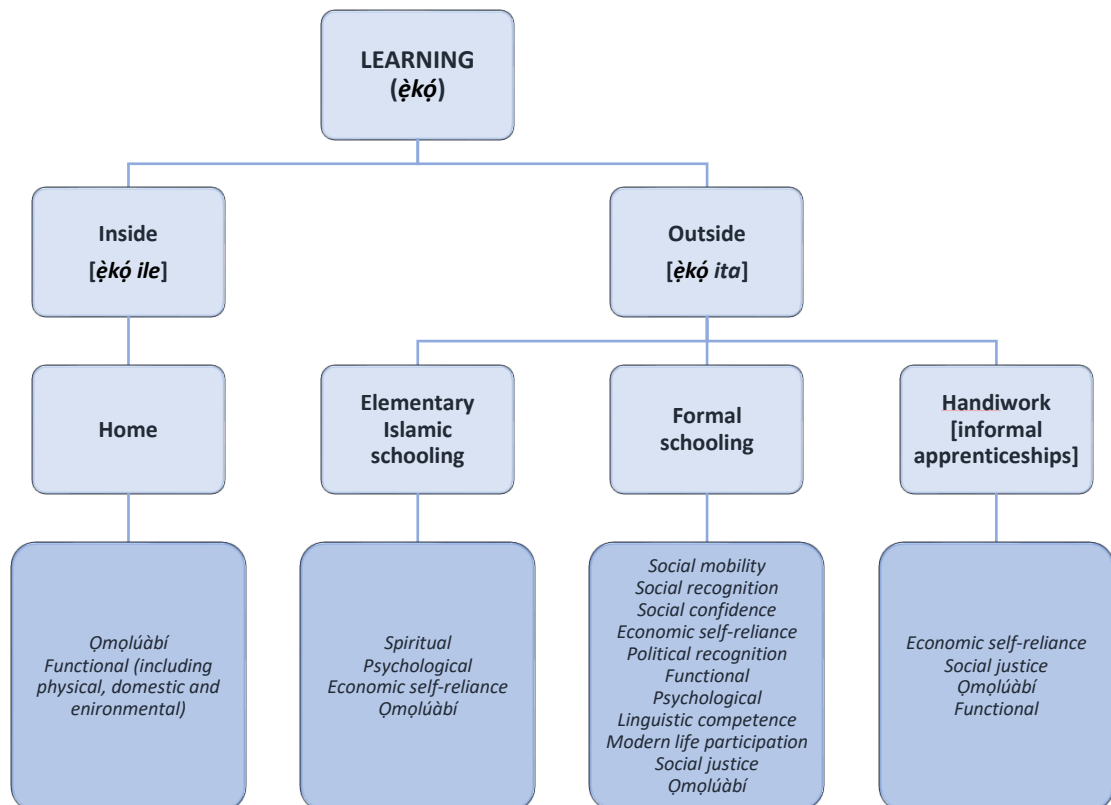
For one commA mother, attending *ilé kéwú* places the fear of God in the child's heart so that the child refrains from mischievous or bad behavior (Mother1 2019/01/21) while for a commB grandfather, *èkọ ilé kéwú* plays a critical role in helping manage life's challenges, even from childhood (Grandfather4 2019/02/04). For instance, a child who attends both *ilé kéwú* and *ilé ìwé* may use learnings of the former to pray and seek help for the latter if the latter begins to prove too difficult.

The interconnectedness in Grandfather4's illustration exemplifies one of the ways the various forms of learning reinforce one another. For parents, home learning is the basis of all other forms of learning and inculcates the socio-cultural (*Ọmọlúàbí*), environmental and physical (bodily) management capabilities required to thrive in the other spheres; schoolteachers and trainers further reinforce home learning while imparting new knowledge and skills (for trainers, see Haan & Serrière, 2002); and *Ààfáàs* reinforce home learning while equipping children with the spiritual capabilities necessary to fulfil religious obligations and

⁸⁸ Elementary (or pre-primary) level of Islamic studies – what children learn when they attend *ile kewu*.

withstand life's inevitable challenges. In addition to these, parents identified benefits or what they value about the various forms of learning, leading to an expanded list of capabilities (last row of the following diagram, neither ranked nor weighted):

Figure 7.3 Parental ethnotheories and learning capabilities



The capabilities are explained on the next page:

Table 7.2 Parents' desired learning capabilities and functionings for children

Home learning	Elementary Islamic schooling	Formal school learning	Handiwork (non-formal learning)
Qmqlùàbí <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaches cultural norms, good character, how to relate with others (in society), how to care for self (body) & environment facilitates positive teacher-child / Ààfàà-child / trainer-child interactions and relations [a child with] brings repute and respect to families (i.e., when assessed/identified in society) 	Spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaches how to read Arabic (i.e., to recite the Quran) instils knowledge to practice Islam, especially how to pray helps manage life's challenges (i.e., through prayer for self and others) 	Social mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables progress and advancement in life 	Economic self-reliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables creation of primary or supplementary income generating micro-enterprises enable married women's financial independence facilitates economic support to self, parents and families [earnings] gives parents 'rest' (i.e., through child's economic independence)
Functional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> underpins and facilitates other types of learning enables existence (i.e., indispensable: without other forms of learning, one may still live with just home learning) facilitates children's school learning (i.e., teachers will better attend to children with, e.g., children who can run errands) inculcates <i>physical, domestic and environmental</i> management skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaches girls (boys, where there are no girls) to manage the home and environment enables mothers' rest as children assume home responsibilities enables unmarried men's self-reliance (i.e., ability to self-care without reliance on a woman) 	Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotes mental fortitude Economic self-reliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates foundation for further Islamic schooling which may lead to employment as Ààfààs, government officials, etc.) 	Social recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> brings prestige to families, communities: employed children become 'people' enables cultural or occupational recognition (i.e., local titles or positions) prevents shame associated with lack of schooling (and unschooled children's future cursing of parents) confers seniority (upturns cultural notions of age seniority) Social confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> instils knowledge, wisdom, English skills to speak to anyone of any status Economic self-reliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> certificate potentiates consistent, salaried jobs which enable financial planning future earnings may be used to support self, parents & families future earnings (and financial independence) give parents rest Political recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables political or governmental jobs, contracts, appointments, etc. 	Social justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [earnings] reduces 'earnings gap' created by unemployment (of the schooled)
	Qmqlùàbí <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotes fear of God and prevents mischievous behavior in children teaches respect for parents, elderly; and how to relate with others in society engages children thereby minimizing play 	Functional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> amplifies handiwork (through literacy & numeracy skills to document inventory, calculate profits & losses, etc.) and augments innate intelligence aids non-literate or non-numerate parents enables financial or wealth management generates objectified capital: visible (i.e., written) and usable as evidence or documentation (e.g., for intergenerational knowledge transfer) instils knowledge which increases one's 'fertility' (i.e., productivity) Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables problem management which results in a life of ease and enjoyment Linguistic competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables ability to read/write in Yorùbá and (preferably) English instils knowledge, wisdom, English skills to speak to anyone of any status Modern life participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> instils knowledge, wisdom to engage in modern life (i.e., with technology) Social justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables detection of lies or cheating (through literacy and numeracy) 	Qmqlùàbí <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engages children thereby minimizing play or mischievous behavior (i.e., after school and on weekends) occupies (limits idleness of) the unemployed reinforces Qmqlùàbí traits (i.e., through trainers' discipline) Functional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enables practical skills acquisition enables other full-time pursuits: flexible scheduling renders it practicable alongside full-time jobs or schooling
		Qmqlùàbí <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforces Qmqlùàbí traits (i.e., through teachers' discipline) 	

The importance of *Qmqlùàbí*, a cultural capital, is reflected in its appearance across all forms of learning and, as will be discussed later in **7.5**, reflected amongst parents' expectations of teachers. Evident also is the highly symbolic valuing of schooling through status, recognition, and the social capital enabled by social mobility and confidence. Economic self-reliance (i.e., economic capital) is another highly valued capability, one interrelated with the functional skills and knowledge which enable it (through schooling, on the one hand, and handiwork, on the other)⁸⁹. For parents in both communities, schooling's functionality is further instrumental, given its amplification of other pursuits, particularly handiwork. As one father explained:

Even the one who doesn't find government work, do you understand, even if it's the job of a farmer, s/he'll know how to read, s/he'll know how to write. Do you understand? Even if it's buying and selling that s/he wants to do, s/he'll know how to write, s/he'll know how to read...We now, do you understand, who are doing buying and selling now, we use our common sense (*'làákàyè'*) since we don't know how to write and how to read. (Father3commB 2018/12/05)

Notably, with schooling and handiwork, parents value children's capability to secure justice. For the former, this often means the capability to apply schooling's functional knowledge to financial and other transactions to prevent and detect cheating. For the latter, this means the capability to immediately convert handiwork skills to earn and save towards important milestones to compensate for the delay caused by schooling's prolonged graduate unemployment. Highlighted below are this and the other constraints identified by parents (none was identified for handiwork):

Table 7.3 Limitations of the different learning capabilities

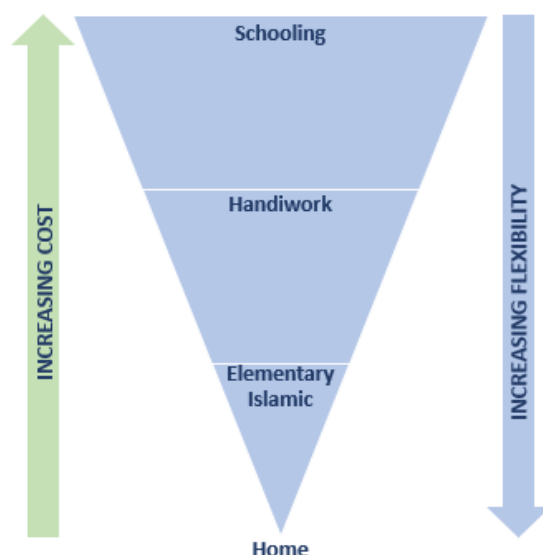
Home learning	Elementary Islamic schooling	Formal school learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oral and invisible unlike formal learning (i.e., must be retrieved mentally) so may be forgotten or lost over time cannot be used as a qualification to access job or other opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited linguistic competence (teaches Arabic which is not the language used in formal schools or employment) limited opportunities for government work (few opportunities exist in the religious sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme post-tertiary unemployment; employment only through political or other connections lack of wealth accumulation (due unemployment) delays key life stages e.g., getting married, having children, etc. idleness, due to unemployment cannot be used to observe Islamic faith useless on Islamic day of judgment most expensive, with inflexible payment structure

A key limitation highlighted by parents was schooling's economic constraints. Schooling was identified as the most expensive form of learning with the most rigid payment structure (see **Appendix G** for the cost of primary to secondary schooling). Home learning, unsurprisingly, is free and, accordingly, most flexible. Of schooling, handiwork, and elementary Islamic schooling, elementary Islamic is believed cheapest with the

⁸⁹ This also highlights a circularity whereby some capabilities function as resources or meta-capabilities for other capabilities (Binder & Coad, 2011).

most flexible payment structure, while handiwork is believed second cheapest with its flexibility and negotiability engendered by existing relationships between trainers and parents (or parents' social networks – parental engagement in handiwork is further examined in **8.3.3**):

Figure 7.4 Forms of learning costs and flexibility



Notably, the flexibility of the payment structure aligns with the flexibility of scheduling (and learning): schooling's highly rigid timetable contrasts the more flexible timetables of handiwork, elementary schooling, and home learning (in increasing order of flexibility).

This section has demonstrated parents' complex ethnotheories of learning and the plethora of positive capabilities parents value in formal school learning, contesting teachers' perspectives of rural parents' ignorance about schooling. In the next section, I further explore parents' discourses around schooling by focusing on salient themes around schooling's opportunities and limitations.

7.4. Parents' perspectives on schooling

Against the backdrop of parents' broader ethnotheories of learning were perspectives specific to formal schooling. The following examines the key themes from these perspectives.

7.4.1. "Ojú ti la" – eyes are now open

Various iterations of the expression *ojú ti la* were evoked across both communities as rationales for sending children to school. Along with those who revealed parents' eyes are *now* open, some stated that *ojú ti mo* (eyes are *now* clean), while others regrettably hearkened back to the days when *ojú dudu* (eyes were black)

when some [great] grandparents hid children (including some commA/B parents) in rafters or in the back room, or sent them to the farm to evade schooling advocates because they prioritized farming (i.e., didn't see the value of schooling) or thought children would be sold into slavery. For parents, black and dirty eyes had, until not very long ago, impaired their sight of schooling's possibilities. Having now become a part of 'civilization', parents' visions were no longer blurred: they had become 'light' such that previously black and dirty eyes were now clear and bright to the opportunities of schooling (Father5commA 2018/12/17). Previously perceived as optional, schooling was now believed to be inevitable: "we have now seen that with the times that are left now (i.e., that we are in now), it is compulsory for a child to go to school" (Father6commB 2018/12/06). However, while these views were shared by all parents interviewed, the data suggest other parents were less convinced, particularly in commB. For Father6commB, schoolB's population should be higher were it not for the "many" young children "remaining at home" whose parents had not brought them to school because "their (i.e., the parents') eyes do not see" (2018/11/29).

The temporality of parents' desires for schooling was further echoed in their use of the Yorùbá term *ìlọsíwájú*, which literally means *moving to the front* and is translated as 'progress' or 'advancement'. In comparison to what parents perceived as their current (and historical) stagnation, schooling represented 'forward movement' and its opportunities promised families upward inter-generational social mobility. Thus, residence in rural environments notwithstanding, parents wanted their children to gain valued schooling capabilities to move along with the rest of "computerized" urban society and to ensure that their children are not left behind and that they do "what [age] mates are doing in life...in [the] day and age" "of opened eyes" (Mother2commA 2018/02/10; Father7commB 2019/02/07).

7.4.2. Schooling is like an investment

Parents, particularly in commA, reflected that schooling was akin to an investment whose returns were recoverable over time. Father8 – one of the certified teachers – illustrated with the example of Father6 who would be in a higher position than his current role as a [retiree]⁹⁰ transporter had it not been that those who first went to school (before becoming transporters) had moved ahead of him and were now "eating the gains that Father6 was supposed to be eating" (2018/12/18). For Father8, schooling was something done "in advance," in readiness for the future when "it may become useful": "there is hope in the future for one who has gone to school, s/he may eventually find a way." For a commA grandmother, schooling was like buying goods in advance:

⁹⁰ Retired from daily driving but still involved with the local transport union as a senior, respected figure. For Father8, had Father6 gone to school, he would have been elected as union leader. Father6 himself alluded to this during a separate interaction when he regretted his lack of schooling which was presently "paining" him (2018/12/10).

...it's like when one buys goods and stores it...[and later brings it out to peddle it, saying], these goods, I have these goods if anyone is looking for it o, I have these goods if anyone is looking for it o. You know that when they're, the time that they're looking for it, one would just bring it out...it's not like s/he'll hurry and go and buy it and then bring it out.... You who you already have it, you'll take it (i.e., the profit), that's you who already have it... To go to school in advance is that! (Grandmother4commA 2018/12/10)

Like the previous sub-section where parents' desires for schooling had a temporal dimension, parents' understanding of the schooling process was evidently also temporal. Further highlighting this, Father5commA, the other certified teacher (and then HT), likened schooling to the morning (i.e., early stages) of life whose food (i.e., gain) is eaten in the evening (i.e., later stages of life). Although one commB mother (Mother7) echoed this temporality, noting that children who went to school would "see its gains" in the future, commA parents more specifically articulated an understanding of schooling as a long term investment whose benefits would eventually come given patience, faith and perseverance.

7.4.3. Investment returns are no longer *quick*

Across both communities, parents' foremost expectation from their significant investments of time and money on schooling (see **Appendix G**) was a salaried job within the Federal or state civil service. However, this expectation was gradually diminishing given perceptions of extreme levels of unemployment in the state (and in Nigeria, more broadly, as discussed in **2.2**) in light of the limited number of government jobs for which too many tertiary graduates competed (Father5commA, Father6commA, Father3commB, Grandfather4commB, Father5commB, Father6commB, Father7commB, Grandfather8commB). Parents reported that such structural challenges affected not only their children but others within their communities. For instance, in commA, three parents had elder children who had, in the past year, completed tertiary schooling (Mother2 – BSc; Mother7 – NCE; Father8 – one BSc and one NCE). None of them had secured employment; instead, all were or were about to be enrolled in handiwork. Notably, five other commA parents (Mothers 1, 2 and 3; and Fathers 6 and 8) who, at the time, had children pursuing teaching certifications (NCE) at COEs (five females; one male) and a university degree (one female), all had them enrolled in handiwork which the teens attended during school holidays.

Remarking that the number of unemployed university and polytechnic graduates in commA were "just a little many" and though unable to recall them all, Father8 provided two additional names of unemployed tertiary graduates (one who graduated within the past three years; and the other within the past year). In commB, only one among selected parents (Father6) had a son who had recently (past 3 years) completed

tertiary level schooling (NCE): at the time of our interaction during fieldwork, the son had been searching for a teaching role for more than three years.

For parents, what was worrisome was not the extreme nature of Nigeria's unemployment but rather the *protracted* nature of the extreme unemployment. Fulfilling the promise of schooling i.e., expanding human capabilities (Unterhalter, 2003) through, for example, obtaining waged employment – was “not really quick [and] is no longer quick...at all” (Father8 2018/12/18). Schooling had, thus, become a source of discouragement for parents:

But now, especially, now, given what our eyes see, parents are becoming discouraged about the children. They don't want to count school as anything any longer... but the understanding and the eye that we're using to look at it now is that the issue of schooling for all of Nigeria together, the people are becoming discouraged. 'Due' to that...pfft...the majority of children, when they graduate, to find a way to go, to find a way to take it, [that way] doesn't want to be there for them anymore. (Father8 2019/02/18)

Nevertheless, parents tried to retain their optimism of a “bright future” particularly on behalf of their teen-aged children, the majority of whom who had reportedly become utterly uninterested in schooling⁹¹:

...Even much of the students who are graduating now (i.e., from J/SSS), if it's not the one that has heart (i.e., is determined), they don't want to go forward anymore at all. We who are the parents are the ones forcing them that, ok, let us sacrifice that they further should go forward, that God will let the future be good. (Father8 2018/12/18)

The inability to obtain employment and earn a salaried wage constituted only part of parents' discouragement. As indicated in **Table 7.3** on limitations, parents were also concerned about the idleness brought on by unemployment which, to them, was a pathway to mischievous behaviour such as theft, keeping bad company (and thereby becoming difficult to parent) and working as political thugs during election campaign periods (Father5commB, Father6commB, Father6commA, Father8commA). Moreover, the lack of a salaried wage was merely the means to an end. As discussed in the previous section, parents reported that unemployed young people remained dependent on them and were unable to attain critical functionings such as getting married, having children, working towards owning and building a home, etc., in early adulthood (Father8commA, Father5commB). The culmination of these effects was the diminishing

⁹¹ This echoes Father6commA and Father6commB who also mentioned their teenage sons' expressed uninterest in schooling (and preference for handiwork) and Mother7commA's teenage [step]daughters who confessed to me, “we don't even want to go to school anymore!” (2018/12/04).

socio-economic gap between the schooled and the unschooled such that “[the two] have now become equal” (Father6commB 2018/12/06). Father8commA elaborated:

... So [unemployment] has enabled that gap to be, that gap of going to school...to reduce...[because] they finish going to school and they do not find jobs. Those who are now going out – where others finish secondary school or even still primary school – who are learning *isê ɔwó*, so those ones, when these ones when they finish degree, finish everything, they [who have learned *isê ɔwó*] have done freedom (i.e., graduated). They have begun work, they’ll be able to build their homes, others will be buying cars. So that gap is like, it seems like even those who have gone to school, even they are looking at it like, ‘what exactly have we gone to school for?’ From the fact that they’re not quickly able to find jobs to do so that they can also become people. It could be in the future, you know that if they find work, like in line with school, they now get in front [of those who learned *isê ɔwó*] but, pffft, it’s no longer quick anymore, pffft... (2018/12/18)

Despite the above sentiments, all interviewed parents sent their children to primary school; many to junior and secondary; and some to tertiary schooling⁹², and all voiced aspirations for tertiary schooling⁹³. This tenacity is broadly explained by the various benefits of schooling previously outlined, but specifically for three reasons worth reiterating. First is the inevitability of schooling highlighted in **7.4.1**. Second, as mentioned in **7.4.2**, is parents’ belief in the future usefulness or benefit of schooling, even if that future takes a demoralizingly long time. Third, as discussed in **7.3**, parents assert that schooling facilitates handiwork and other income-generating pursuits. The reading and writing identified by Father3commB, others believed, facilitated accuracy in the calculation of business profits and losses (Father6commA, Father5commB, Father6commB, Father7commB). For instance, someone who operates a business will be able to write down the cost of their inventory and:

... if s/he sells goods, if s/he ... spends from that money (i.e., the sales), s/he’ll then write it down that I took money, I bought something like this. When s/he now finishes selling those goods and s/he does the calculation on the money that s/he used to buy those goods, whatever s/he gains there, if it’s that s/he’s short in hand and doesn’t have gain, s/he would have known... (Father7commB 2019/02/07)

⁹² In commA, this was six out of seven parents with post-secondary aged children; in commB, it was one out of seven. For most commB parents, tertiary schooling is completely unaffordable and for few among these, it is unaffordability coupled with disenfranchisement, what some teachers perceived as ‘uninterest’ and which manifested in the forced trade-off adaptive preferences discussed in **6.4**.

⁹³ There was greater specificity amongst commA parents. For instance, where most commB parents indicated their interest in ‘further schooling’, most in commA specified polytechnic, university or NCE, representing the range of tertiary options typically pursued in commA.

However, while all commB parents espoused schooling's functional role, the data suggest most felt this functional knowledge would be acquired by the end of secondary schooling.

7.4.4. Schooling as injustice: The dismal prospects of the *omọ tálíkà*

For commA and commB parents, such high levels of discouragement and disenfranchisement were only felt by parents like themselves who, as parents described, are *talika* (i.e., poor) and relatively unconnected⁹⁴. Although commA parents were generally less poor than commB and there was greater socio-economic variation between commA families⁹⁵, parents in both communities described their children as *omọ tálíkà* or *omọ m̀̀kúnù*, translated respectively as “children of the poor” and “children of the masses”. Unlike the *omọ olówó* (children of the rich, especially of politicians) who secure a job immediately after (and sometimes before⁹⁶) graduating from tertiary schooling, the *omọ tálíkà*'s prospects for post-tertiary employment were severely limited and when they occur, usually for the riskiest, least-desirable and lowest paying jobs:

...But all the money, where all the money is now, ahhh! It's their children you'll see there. They're the ones at the central bank. They're the ones at the, at the place of petroleum, NNPC, all those customs, it's their children who are there. But in the army, in the police, where they'll use their lives to waste, it's the *omọ tálíkà* they'll put there.... (Father8commA 2018/12/18)

During election campaign periods, parents feared their children's civic engagement as they reported many *omọ tálíkàs* are hired by politicians to incite violence and disrupt elections, often endangering their lives:

Friend1: Now that politics (i.e., elections) has arrived...

Father6commB: They're the ones who know how to use the cutlass!

Friend2: They're the ones who know how to use the cutlass...

Friend1: They're the ones who use the cutlass, who use the knife, they're the ones who know the sense of how to do everything...

⁹⁴ One of the extended commA brothers (who resides outside commA) was the chairman of the LGA for eight years.

⁹⁵ Wealth is defined here as economic and objectified cultural capital. For example, one of commA's fathers owns the Arabic and private primary (he took over the latter from its failed proprietor). He is thus *less poor* than many commA families. However, he reportedly profits little from the schools as there is no real payment for the Arabic (families are supposed to buy clothing and party items upon graduation and give the Alfa some money but most do not) and most parents struggle to pay the private's fees (from 1000 to 3000Naira per term). During one interaction, he noted that at last count, parents' accumulated fees owed was more than 700,00Naira (£1500).

⁹⁶ One parent alleged that some politicians' children are even given civil jobs from secondary school (i.e., the child is on the payroll and receives salary monthly even though s/he has not yet begun tertiary schooling). Upon graduation, the child reports to the office to work and continues to receive their salary. This example was repeated by a teacher in the city whose secondary school payroll allegedly included such a child.

Father6commB: All the ones who hire them for these jobs, their own children, you won't see them in Nigeria

Friend1: Never ever!

Father6commB: Those who have left this land, whom they have taken and thrown over there! They have gone to school...

Friend2: Will they let their children pick up the cutlass?

Friend1: Those who, who, who the *tálíkàs* are spending money for...where the day of pennies and shillings, that's what they spent that their children were able to do the schooling that they did...when politics now arrive, it's them they'll give cutlass to...when they were not able to use their schooling... ... if it had been, if it had been that the kind of schooling they've brought now, if it had existed before, and if each person is at their place of work, how will s/he be able to do all those things for them? (Father6commB 2018/12/06)

For Grandfather8commB and Father8commA, the *ọmọ olówós* are often less smart and ill-suited for the positions manipulated for them, yet the *ọmọ tálíkàs*, who are often smarter, are not given the opportunities they deserve:

And the rich are these, they're spoiling things for themselves, let us not say they're spoiling things for us, it's the brain of another child that their children will be using...the *ọmọ tálíkà* who is smart, they'll now take his/her certificate, they'll give it to their child. But God sees it. God sees it! (Grandfather8commB 2019/11/18)

Unsurprisingly, parents' views of the dismal fate of the schooled but unconnected *ọmọ tálíkàs* were embedded within broader views of judicial oppression of the poor by the rich [politicians] in Nigeria. Justice, meant to be blind, was believed to see politicians and their families:

...They have spoilt schooling! And it's indeed our politicians, our government. When it's that if their own children don't know it, they'll say be doing it. It's the *ọmọ tálíkàs* whom they're able to put their feet on their head... And it's their children you'll be finding in cults, in all those cultism things like that, they're the ones who will be disrupting the school, who will be, and when they catch them, they'll say 'it's the child of *lággbájá* (i.e., a politician or known person), release him/her'! They won't lock them in jail, they won't let them serve punishment, things like that. It's our leaders who are spoiling the country, *fa*! They are indeed the ones! (Father8commA 2018/12/18)

Admonishing the impunity of politicians who purchase schooling certificates to access political opportunities, another, Father6commA, mused sadly:

...Given that we didn't follow...we have 'constitution'...we have 'constitution' but we don't follow it...Don't we have the law that if someone does this thing, this thing is what we'll do to him/her? If you do something like this thing, this thing is what we'll do to him/her? If you do something that's not good, if you have money in Nigeria, they won't do that thing to you again...'So'...are we now following the constitution? [*hisses softly – out of frustration or defeat or both? (field notes)*] And what is crooked is greatest from our leaders, because if their child does something, no one will hear [it]. If the *omọ tálíkà* who doesn't have money...if s/he does something, they'll tell the whole world! ... Say they steal this 'handset' now, the 'handset' that's not up to how much, they'll say s/he should go to jail. Another one could look at something which belongs to the government, which belongs to everyone and then sell it! And the person would be free... (2018/12/10)

Connecting the injustice of schooling outcomes – due to unfulfilled promises of employment – to the injustice of schooling process – regarding the quality of schools, given poor management of the education system by state and local governments – Father8commA pointed out the preference of “top, top, top government officers” for “expensive, private schools that people are keeping an eye on” given that “they also know that what they have created (i.e., public schools), is not good” (2019/02/18). And while many parents lamented the high costs of schooling, particularly at the termination of J/SSS and in tertiary, none explicitly extended the perception of injustice to the costs (i.e., process) of schooling as some did for quality (another indicator of process) and outcomes. Notably, some teachers echoed parents' critique of the quality of public schools and, as shown in **6.5.1**, one did so explicitly. Others did so indirectly through their complaints of the lack of instructional materials, inadequacy of professional development, and poor compensation, among others (SchoolBTeachers 2019/11/20). Nevertheless, the sentiment of discouragement was more fervently evoked by commA parents, more of whom appeared to be aware of the inadequacy of “little” (i.e., secondary) schooling and thus struggled to send children to some form of tertiary school (see **7.4.3**) in the hopes of enhancing children's functional capabilities. Unlike commB where many parents effectively stopped struggling after secondary schooling (footnote **92**), commA parents were dispirited that in spite of their struggles, their hopes remained unfulfilled as manifested through the numerous un- and underemployed commA youth.

This section has explored salient themes in parents' broader perspectives on schooling, revealing parents' interest in but critical views of schooling due to the recognition of their relative positions within the prevailing economic and class structures in the field: *dominated* both in terms of volume and structure of resources. The findings suggest that basic schooling, as a subfield of schooling, suffers a deficit of autonomy in the field of power, given capital and resources from other fields (in this case, politics) have legitimacy and affect the position (and relations between) agents within the subfield (and also the schooling field)

(Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). Moreover, parents (consumers within the [sub]field) are subject to strong political and economic constraints which affect their capability to school children and ultimately, secure children's school learning capabilities. In this way, outcomes are determined by and subject not only to parents' actions, but also to the relations between learners, parents, educators, politicians, economic actors (i.e., proprietors of private schools) and other agents within the [sub]field. As agents, parents are located in the bottom left quadrant of **Figure 3.6** They possess limited resources and limited autonomy and are thus dominated in both dimensions of the social space.

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence is also helpful here to underscore parents' perception of the non-coercive, symbolic forms of domination inherent within the basic schooling subfield. The findings suggest parents' alignment with Bourdieu's position, as discussed in **3.5.4**, that public schooling is the greatest contributor to the reproduction of social class, given the way it reinforces and consecrates the poverty of the *tálíkàs*. While it may be argued that parents' recognition of the way things are (i.e., misrecognition) legitimizes symbolic power, their *active complicity* – 'their belief in the legitimacy of [symbolic] power and the legitimacy of those who wield it' – (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 23) is less evident. Although some scholars like Thapar-Björkert et al. (2016) suggest that legitimation occurs when social agents accept things as they are, these findings suggest the need to distill the notion of legitimation, separating *misrecognition* (recognition of symbolic power, i.e., the way things are) from *acceptance* of symbolic power. Though parents recognize the current structures and believe themselves powerless to change them, their vociferous critique of these structures suggests their rejection of the same, rendering their complicity reluctant rather than active. Building on these findings, in the next section, I deepen the exploration of parents' perspectives to examine what is understood about children's schooling.

7.5. Parents' understanding of schooling

In addition to broader ideas around schooling, the data reveals parents also had ideas about the school as a physical space, the learning which occurs in schools, and their own role as parents. This section discusses these.

7.5.1. Parents' views on the school as a physical and learning space

The data suggest parents' knowledge of the process of schooling (i.e., what school is, what happens in it and what constitutes learning) is as varied as their articulation of the outcomes of schooling (i.e., its hoped-for benefits). On one hand, parents held rather uniform views about the school as a physical space. Neither commA nor commB's parents were satisfied with the physical condition of their primary schools. Both groups highlighted infrastructural inadequacies including lack of computers, electricity, water, toilets,

playground, sports equipment, classrooms, and drugs (at the school-community clinic). Many alluded to collapsed and collapsing classroom blocks; broken ceilings; broken doors; and dented classroom floors which soiled children's uniforms and created potentially fatal hazards: "Look at our school...because we don't want the building to collapse on our children...God will not kill our children!" (Father2commB 2018/12/05).

Figure 7.5 Left: collapsed block, schoolA; right: KG classroom, schoolB



For some parents, these hazards and structural deficiencies rendered their school "not fine," "not neat" and "not good," and as such, characterize a school which is "not normal" (Mother1commA 2018/12/17; Father6commA 2018/12/17) where a normal school would not only fulfil safety and security criteria but also aesthetic ones thereby serving as a source of communal pride:

Let the school be 'good'! Let the school be 'good'! So that the children themselves, let them know that, yes! It is *indeed* school that these children are going to! [So that they'll be saying] That one school that's in that commA, eh, ahh! It's really 'ok'! (Mother9commA 2018/12/17)

On the other hand, parents held mixed views about the school as a teaching and learning space (i.e., about teachers and what happens in the classroom). Two commB parents (Fathers 2 and 6), mentioned the insufficiency of schoolB's teachers. For Father6, the "learning of [our] children remains a little to be enough [because] the teachers who are there are not enough for it (i.e., to teach all subjects which should be taught)" (2018/12/19). He cited the lack of practical, skills-based subject teachers (i.e., science, computers and other potential forms of handiwork) as proof of the incompleteness of school learning, noting that it was "suffering" for children to not have "learning from school beyond that [one] just knows how to write

and to read” because children who graduate without haven’t learned any handiwork merely “graduate in vain” (see also Marphatia et al., 2010).

However, not only were the teachers not enough, for Father6, the few who were there were “not coming regularly.” Other parents expressed similar concerns about teachers’ attendance and punctuality. Though selected commB parents were unanimous about schoolB HT’s punctuality and attendance, only one parent – Father4 who lives across the street – reported schoolB teachers attended regularly. Four others (Grandmother1, Father2, Father6, Grandfather8) alluded to irregularities in attendance and punctuality which reduced children’s learning. Father2, who lived beside schoolB, was particularly vociferous about the teachers who commuted from the capital who were not “correct!” in their attendance. One morning at 10.50am when he and I had just begun to speak, we heard greetings in the distance (“Good morning, Ma!” “Good morning!”). He turned his head in the direction of the voices and muttered to himself, “Aren’t those the teachers of those ones (i.e., schoolB J/SSS) who are just arriving?” At commA, the AHT was similarly heralded as a beacon of punctuality and attendance, a reputation field observations suggested she deserved. However, commA parents’ views around teacher attendance were typically related to the first few weeks of school each term when children added an extra week (or two) to their holiday, having informed parents that no teachers would yet be at school (and therefore, no learning would take place). Unlike commB where a few parents who lived within sight of school had clearer perceptions of teachers’ attendance and punctuality, at commA (and commB, for parents who lived out of sight of school), parents’ perceptions were subject to the information transmitted by children. For many parents, a lack of teachers and teachers’ poor attendance and punctuality had the same outcome: a ‘shortage’ of learning for children.

Their concerns notwithstanding, parents appeared to understand the reasons behind teachers’ irregular attendance and non-punctuality. Father6, for example, attributed them to governments’ lack of payment of teachers’ salaries. Others noted that teachers complained during PTA meetings and other interactions that they had no money to pay for transport. Field observations corroborated parents’ concerns. Except the HT, schoolB teachers were often absent and almost always late. The situation was slightly less acute at schoolA and like the schoolB HT, the AHT came daily and arrived first. SchoolB was worse because it was farther (and more costly to commute to) from the capital where most teachers lived (though compared with even more rural schools, or schools which were not by the roadside, schoolB was ‘better’). SchoolB’s HT lived in a nearby town and managed a small ailing car. SchoolB’s P6 teacher lived in the same town and often hitched with the HT. As some schoolB teachers disclosed, weekly absenteeism (i.e., one or two specific days) was usually pre-arranged with the HT. Though the HT did not admit to this, she admitted to leniency around teachers’ absenteeism because teachers said they had no transport fare as salaries had not been paid and, even where salaries were paid, they could not afford to spend most of it on transport as there was no rural transport allowance. However, she often expressed frustration at particularly

habitually absent and highly non-punctual teachers, and at the policy conditions which limited her ability to manage such teachers. Except the schoolB HT and schoolA AHT, observations suggest most teachers did not often attend school five days a week. At commB, towards the end of fieldwork when three new teachers had resumed, parents' perception of teachers' attendance improved even though teachers' individual practices remained the same (absences were less glaring as more teachers were present).

Despite concerns about quantity (of teachers and their teaching), parents in both communities (even commB Fathers 2 and 6) expressed satisfaction with the quality of the teachers and the teaching in their schools even while unable to specifically state what children were learning. Parents were confident teachers were keeping an eye on children's learning and "teaching them very well" (Grandfather8commB 2018/12/19) because children were passing their exams and they (parents) were seeing the difference in them. To deduce that children were passing, parents would "show [the report cards] to the elders (siblings) that they should help [them] look...because they [parents] didn't go to school" (Mother2commA 2018/12/10). Although few parents reiterated their general inability to assess learning, given their own lack of schooling (commA Mothers 1 and 2; and commB Fathers 2, 3 and 4), the data suggest parents (including the few) did evaluate learning themselves to some extent. The ability to write and read (the alphabet, notes or letters, own names, etc.) demonstrated learning, and some parents assessed children's writing through their reading:

When we say, write something, write something, after he finishes writing it, we'll then say, read it. If he's not able to read it, he hasn't been able to write it then... But once he has written it and we say, now, read it back and he says 'ehn ehn...you said to tell Baba X, to go to X, to return, to bring back the response'...we'll have seen that he was able to... (Father2commB 2018/12/05)

One parent – Grandfather8commB who had attended adult school to learn to read and write *Yorùbá* – asked children to read their exercise books or letters written on practice boards at home (see 8.2) while another judged the quality of children's writing by its neatness (Father5commB 2019/02/20). Although Father2commB reportedly asked his children to write in English or *Yorùbá*, others did not explicitly mention the language being written or read, though the data suggest it is more likely *Yorùbá* as most parents would not be able to assess English. However, like Marvin (1975)'s older but relevant study found, English was a highly desired competence, and in both communities, parents perceived children who spoke English were learning while those who didn't were not. During a PTA meeting, Father6commB *again* implored the HT (to nodding heads by other parents) – as he had done many times prior according to the HT – to "let [the children] be speaking 'English' little by little [because] if they don't know it until they get to secondary, if they leave secondary if it's that they'll again go elsewhere [to learn it], it's powerful (i.e., it's not good)!" (2019/03/20). For Grandfather8commB, the inability of one of his grandchildren to either "write letters"

or “speak English” compelled him to request his repetition, to which the HT obliged (2018/12/19). For Father5commB and Father8commA, learning assessments extended to *ilé kéwú* (elementary Islamic schooling), where children’s performance was determined by their ability to read their *ilé kéwú* lesson/textbooks (*tíràs*).

In addition to being asked to write and read alphabets, own names, parents’ messages, or letters, and *tíràs*, children were asked to write and read names and numbers (contacts) on mobile phones. This was not only reported (Mother8sistercommB 2019/02/11), it was observed various times during fieldwork. While children’s reading fluency (i.e., not stuttering or mispronouncing words, names and numerals) indicated reading and, by extension, writing ability in *Yorùbá*, *English* or *Arabic*, parents also utilized the colour of teachers’ writings – red means incorrect – while some understood basic numeracy (e.g., report card position two is better than nine) and recognized symbols such as “X” (wrong, or not good) and zeros. Mother8commB elaborated:

We know that if they write *òdo* (zero) in a book, we see it. We haven’t gone to school, but we know that if they have drawn it in circles like this (*she draws a circle on the bed with her fingers – field notes*), it’s *òdo*. We also see another one that they do like the *àdà* (cutlass) that we carry, or the *àáké* (axe) that we use to cut trees on the farm, they’ll do it like this (*she draws a tick in the air*), we know that they’ve gotten it is that. (2019/02/11)

The preponderance of illustrations by commB fathers regarding learning assessment reflects the participant demographic and does not necessarily suggest they engaged more specifically with children’s learning. CommA parents would also be familiar with these and other methods, particularly the two fathers who held teaching certifications.

7.5.2. Parents’ role construction

Parents described their role in schooling in terms of the practices they believed would foster children’s school learning capabilities. Like teachers’ expectations of parental involvement examined in **6.4 (Table 6.3)**, these were categorized using Barger et al. (2019)’s typology as shown in **Table 7.4**. Like **Table 6.3**, the data revealed new data-generated categories.

Table 7.4 Parents' perception of their role in schooling

BARGER ET AL. (2019)'s TYPOLOGY	
SCHOOL-BASED	HOME-BASED
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond to teachers when called to discuss child go meet teacher to discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> child's attendance child's poor performance (i.e., request teacher keep an eye on child) Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend scheduled PTA meetings tell teachers their shortcomings at PTA meetings 	Discussion and Encouragement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask child whether s/he went to school ask what child did at school limit praise for smart child (i.e., to manage pride) teach child to respect teachers at school Cognitive Intellectual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enrol child in after school lessons (hire lesson teachers) check child's book after school (i.e., to see teachers' marks) discuss child's [general] errors with child be child's second teacher Involvement in Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tell elder siblings (or neighbours) to help child with homework discuss child's [homework related] errors with child
DATA-GENERATED TYPOLOGIES	
SCHOOL-BASED	HOME-BASED
Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay school fees purchase school materials, as advised by teachers contribute whatever school requests in timely manner (so child is not beaten at school and becomes sad / discouraged) Ọmọlúàbí-Disciplinatory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> go meet teacher to seek help with discipline (e.g., child who behaves poorly at home) 	Attendance & Punctuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure child punctuality to school School Preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare child quickly in the morning (to prevent lateness) care for children's hygiene Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise each other as parents to keep an eye on their children Ọmọlúàbí-Disciplinatory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discipline child who displays bad behaviour beat children for lateness to school threaten child who doesn't want to attend school with corporal punishment reprimand child for poor performance Ọmọlúàbí-Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide moral guidance and counselling (i.e., about how to behave in the world) teach home learning (i.e., respectful behaviour) so school will be pleasant (i.e., to facilitate teacher-child relations) teach child to respect teachers at school Spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure child (knows how to) practice(s) his/her faith (i.e., prays and goes to church, mosque or <i>ilé kéwú</i>)

As the table demonstrates, parents' perceptions of their role using Barger et al. (2019)'s existing categories (*participation, governance, discussion and encouragement, cognitive intellectual and involvement in homework*), are generally consistent with teachers' expectations (**Table 6.3**). But there is less consistency with the data-generated categories where only three of parents' perceived roles (*provision, attendance & punctuality and school preparedness*) are expected by teachers. However, this is not surprising as parents' data-generated categories primarily reflect their ethnotheories, particularly the interconnectedness of *ẹkọ ilé* (home learning) and *ẹkọ ilé iwé* (school learning). School-based *provision* and home-based *attendance & punctuality and school preparedness* were defined below **Table 6.3**. The other new categories are defined as:

School-based:

- **Qmqlúàbí-Disciplinary** – parents’ admonition or reprimand of children within the school compound, including verbal and physical (corporal) punishment, on schooling-relevant issues.

Home-based:

- **Engagement** – engagement with schooling at home/community including parent to parent and parent to other children discussions about schooling; communal actions around schooling; school choice strategies and actions; etc.
- **Qmqlúàbí-Disciplinary** – admonition or reprimand of children at home or in the community, including verbal and physical (corporal) punishment, on schooling-relevant issues.
- **Qmqlúàbí-Socio-cultural** – home learning practices believed to help improve children’s performance by facilitating the relationship between learners and teachers (see 7.3).
- **Spiritual** – spiritual practices believed to help children become better learners and positive members of community (see 7.3).

Given parents’ role constructed practices are highly aligned with parents’ actual practices, the next chapter discusses these typologies in-depth. Notably, the importance attached to *Qmqlúàbí*, which features amongst parents’ perceived roles, is reiterated by its appearance amongst parents’ perception of teachers’ role in schooling:

Table 7.5 Parents’ perception of teachers’ role in schooling

Attendance & Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• coming to school (attendance)• monitoring children’s attendance to school
School Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inspecting children’s body and uniform (and disciplining those who are unclean)
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• monitoring children’s learning at school• teaching children to read and write, along with other subjects• informing parents of poorly performing children• managing teacher-parent and school-parent relations
Qmqlúàbí-Disciplinary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [helping parents] discipline children with bad behaviour• acting as second parent (i.e., treating children as own children, especially re: discipline)• disciplining children who come to school late• ignoring parents who complain about teachers’ disciplinary actions
Qmqlúàbí-Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• teaching children to respect parents at home• doing what is ‘good’ for children (i.e., as adults who know better)• [helping parents] discipline children with bad behaviour

As seen, while parents ascribed teaching and learning responsibilities to teachers – in addition to *attendance & punctuality* and elements of *school preparedness* – they believed it was also teachers’ role, as the ‘owners’ of children in school (as they described), to help reinforce *Qmqlúàbí*. For instance, all selected parents agreed with teachers’ use of corporal punishment for children who misbehave (e.g., talk back), are late to or skip school or otherwise whose actions were deemed to deserve it. However, parents’

perspectives on corporal punishment were not uniform as schoolB teachers reported some parents disagreed with its use for poor performance, which parents felt was beyond children's control:

ArabicT: ...especially if a child has assignment, if you give them assignment if it's, then you're harsh with them, that you, that you want to beat them-

P6: -or that you say you've beaten him/her, that you say you're now beating him/her

ArabicT: -and you say you want to beat him/her...s/he goes and calls his/her parent...that parent will be telling you that, 'how can you be beating his/her child because of what s/he doesn't know?'

P6: They'll do that o, that they'll come!

ArabicT: They come!

P6: That they'll come and they'll say, 'how can we beat their children'? (P6&Arabic 2019/02/05)

This section has examined parents' views about schools as a physical and a learning space, the latter evident in their views on the quantity of teachers; teacher attendance and punctuality; and assessment of children's school learning through reading, writing, speaking (English), and colour/symbol recognition. It has also outlined parents' perception of theirs and teachers' roles in schooling, demonstrating an alignment which suggests parents expect teachers to reinforce certain valued practices in school. The next section discusses the findings thus far presented and draws some conclusions.

7.6. Chapter discussion and conclusion

This chapter has examined parents' perspectives in-depth, countering the dominant silence and partial narratives about rural, poor, non-literate and non-numerate African parents in the extant literature. In doing so, it has revealed parents' pluralistic ethnotheories of learning as a holistic process of acquiring knowledge, skills and behaviours at home and outside (formal and Islamic schools and informal apprenticeships) towards substantive membership in the community. The pluralism of these ethnotheories also contests teachers' and other stakeholders' uniform, deficit narratives. Further, by incorporating contemporary learning forms, parents' ethnotheories expand current understanding around *Yorùbá* parents' ethnotheories discussed in **3.5.2** (Oyinloye, forthcoming) and, as such, enable deeper insight into the learning strategies parents adopt, particularly their choices about the settings provided for and the competencies acquired by children (Harkness et al., 2010). As such, expanded ethnotheories which incorporate beliefs about contemporary learning forms, including religion or spirituality, may offer important insight for parental engagement in learning in contexts similar to this study. Notably, though Akinwale (2003) highlights parents' valuing of children's belief in God or spirituality, to my knowledge, only Zeitlin (1996) discloses, like this study, parents' use of contemporary religion (in her case, Christianity) to help instil home learning values.

Like this study, Levine et al. (2003)'s *Yorùbá* fathers valued *Ọmọlúàbí* traits – specifically discipline, good classroom behaviour, and errand-running – in children's formal school learning for their ability to positively influence teacher-learner relations, representing some of the informal expectations which function evaluatively (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). However, in this study, while parents mentioned the evaluative function of both *Ọmọlúàbí* and neatness, teachers only mentioned neatness although this may be because teachers were interviewed about parents and spoke of learners generally, not specifically⁹⁷.

Parents' expanded view of learning not only goes beyond schooling, it also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the main forms of capital discussed in **3.5.3**. For instance, parents recognized the importance of educational capital (functional skills and knowledge) for institutionalized cultural capital (academic or other credentialization) which ultimately enables the use of such skills and knowledge to generate the economic (self-reliance) and social capabilities discussed in **7.3**. This interconnectedness was also demonstrated in the limitations identified. Parents believed the acquisition of functional schooling skills and knowledge was constrained by schooling's costs (highest among all forms of learning identified). This echoes findings from the previous chapter where teachers acknowledged poverty constrained parents' access to the resources that are convertible to capabilities. Hart (2018) underscores this when she highlights the importance of access to (and activation of) capital (resources) for the development of capabilities. Unlike teachers' overwhelmingly deficit perceptions revealed in the previous chapter, parents do not suffer a value distortion (Khader, 2013) and appear to express sufficient value for schooling. However, many identified multiple structural challenges including poverty, education implementation, and protracted unemployment which altered their preferences.

Parents' interest in schooling due to greater awareness (i.e., of the requirements of modern life) and their own lack of it echo Donkor (2010) who found, similarly, that peri-urban Ghanaian parents regretted their lack of schooling, not least because of missed occupational opportunities. Likewise, Tucker et al. (2008) revealed rural South African parents' interest in their children's schooling due to their lack of post primary schooling during apartheid. Moreover, findings around parents' critiques of poor quality schooling align with studies reviewed in **3.3**, particularly those of Dunne et al. (2013), Humphreys & Crawford (2014), and Sunal et al. (2003) who similarly highlighted parental perceptions of physical and pedagogical quality issues in Nigerian schools. However, unlike this study, these studies failed to demonstrate the intersection between Nigerian parents' discontent with the processes (quality, cost, etc.) and outcomes of public schooling, on one hand, and their perception that schooling perpetuates social (including judicial) injustice against poor parents and children, on the other. While, as discussed in **6.5**, teachers share this perception,

⁹⁷ For example, on one occasion at school A J/SSS, a teacher effusively praised a female student's goodness, attributed to her ability to diligently run errands.

they appear to miscategorize its effect – parental disenfranchisement with and, sometimes, exit from schooling – as value distortion (i.e., parents’ uninterest in schooling).

The link between schooling and social injustice have been suggested in studies from other parts of Africa, notably Serpell (1993)’s study of life outcomes for rural Zambian children; Wagner (2006)’s exploration of schooling constraints among the San of Botswana; Datzberger (2018)’s study of Ugandan university students’ perspectives on schooling; Walker (2006) and Unterhalter (2003, 2012)’s studies of Western and Southern African teenagers’ schooling relevant capabilities; and Leibowitz & Bozalek (2014) and Wilson-Strydom (2015)’s studies, for example, on inequities in higher education access and participation amongst South Africa’s disadvantaged students. Though both Serpell and Wagner do so from the perspective of parents, and except Serpell to some extent, none of the studies demonstrate that perceptions of schooling’s injustice are embedded within broader views of asymmetric, largely unavoidable, pervasive and profound structural injustice – the differential and sometimes unjust effects of social arrangements on identifiable social groups (Powers & Faden, 2019) –, particularly those manifested through legal systems such as the judiciary. These links also question normative discourses which position schooling as a space without internal contestation and whose outcomes always [immediately] expand capabilities (Unterhalter, 2003). As the findings demonstrate, injustice is deepened when schooling fails to deliver returns on parental investments in the short term, a failure whose effects are felt through various life stages.

The findings around parents’ role construction reveal some nuance. While Pryor (2005) suggests that African parents role construct teachers as primarily responsible for schooling, the parents in this study held teachers responsible for teaching and learning; teachers’ own *attendance & punctuality*; and children’s *school preparedness* inspection and *Qmqlùàbí* capabilities. Unlike many of the studies reviewed in **3.2** which suggest a dissonance between home and school (see also Arunkumar et al. (1999) and Henderson et al. (2020) in the US), parents’ expectation of teachers’ reinforcement of *Qmqlùàbí* capabilities in school suggest a strong degree of home-school congruence in values, beliefs and behavioural expectations, a finding which echoes Masko & Bosiwah (2016)’s study of rural Ghanaian parents and children. As a result, this study’s ethnographic data demonstrates, unsurprisingly, that parents’ role construction of themselves includes but goes beyond typical parental involvement practices – such as those typologized by Barger et al. (2019) – to include capabilities emanating from their ethnotheories. In the next chapter, I explore the extent to which parents pursue the roles they’ve assigned to themselves.

Proverb 3. Resource constraints

Ẹni tí óní orí kòní fílà, ẹ ni tí ó ní fílà kò ní orí

-The one who has a head, doesn't have a cap; the one who has a cap, doesn't have a head (One does not always have the resources one needs). (*Assistant HT, schoolA*).

Chapter 8. Parental involvement in schooling

8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter illuminated the complexity and diversity of parents' perspectives around schooling. Using data and sources from both parents and children, this chapter builds on its predecessor to explore parents' involvement in their children's schooling. It does by responding to the third research question which asks, '*In what ways are parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in Kwara state involved with their children's schooling?*' First, the chapter provides in-depth insight into school- and home-based practices, specifically, parents' available options, their choices, and their pursuit of these choices. Then, it sheds light on prevalent non-schooling practices, some of which contend with schooling. The chapter then examines how social structures influence parents' values and pursuits before concluding with a discussion of its findings.

8.2. The capability space: An overview of parents' everyday involvement

7.5.2 illustrated parents' perceptions of the freedoms they believed they should exercise to secure children's school learning capabilities. Additionally, parents provided examples of their current and past practices. These were combined with observations of those practices to illustrate the breadth of parental involvement. This combination was done to underscore that although parents' reports (of their actions) are not necessarily a complete guide to those actions, they are significant and ought not to be assumed less valid than [researchers'] observations (Goodnow, 1988). The following table outlines these practices using Barger et al. (2019)'s typology, and will be explained in greater detail in the next section:

Table 8.1 Parents' everyday schooling involvement practices: an overview

BARGER ET AL. (2019)'S ADAPTED TYPOLOGY			
SCHOOL-BASED		HOME-BASED	
Reported	Observed	Reported	Observed
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visit school head to inquire about teachers' attendance (i.e., absenteeism) visit school to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> check on teachers (generally) and school activities inquire about child's attendance check on children inquire about children while passing through school compound advocate for children i.e., plead with HT to reinstate suspended late children express gratitude and give gifts to good performing teachers call teachers to discuss school and other (sometimes personal) issues 	Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visiting school to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> see HT check on [own] children coming to see HT when called re: fees, child's behaviour, etc advocating for J/SSS students being sent home (including own child) for leniency due lack of fees payment advocating for students to prevent corporal punishment (for disobeying instructions, not wearing uniform, etc.) discussing child's attendance with teacher (after school, teacher initiated) working as food vendor bringing items requested by school 	Discussion and Encouragement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask whether teacher came to school ask what was done in school verify children's account of what happened in school with (elder) siblings, neighbours, etc. counsel children to monitor their schoolwork 	Discussion and Encouragement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> asking about SSS learner's school schedule (e.g., if she has exams) asking about specific SSS teachers discussing school fees asking child what was done at school praising child for schooling efforts encouraging child during homework completion generally (non-cognitive intellectual) discussing school / schooling
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend scheduled PTA meetings and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss general school issues discuss children's performance and emphasize desired competencies request extra monitoring for 'dull children' counsel fellow parents to do good regarding their children's schooling express viewpoints freely tell school/teachers their shortcomings, i.e., as committee members express curricular preferences to HTs advise HTs to warn often absent teachers 'chase away' (i.e., tell LGEA to transfer) frequently late and absent teachers visit school to check/discuss school issues e.g., infrastructure, population, etc. lobby for more teachers/subjects express preferences to LGEA constitute SBMCs 	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attending PTA meetings (only observed at commB) at PTA meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> counselling/sanctioning each other expressing cognitive concerns (e.g., voicing desire to repeat child) attending PTA meetings when called (commB) visiting school (PTA Chairman) to discuss issues (e.g., school's dwindling population, etc.) discussing SSS related issues with principals/teachers (in own home) 	Cognitive Intellectual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> check children's books review with children in the morning before school (after morning prayers) review children's work after school (especially <i>Yorùbá</i>) and during holidays instruct children to read their books direct elder siblings to check children's books and assess performance (i.e., 'dull' vs 'smart' children) tell school to repeat 'dull' child enrol child in home or holiday lessons supervise older children's notes writing monitor child's progress (i.e., through checking report cards, marks, etc.) 	Cognitive Intellectual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> glancing at child's book after school publicly expressing desire to repeat another child
		Involvement in Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> check children's assignment ask children if given assignment instruct elder siblings to check children's assignment instruct children to do assignment instruct 'smart' children to assist 'dull' ones with assignment assist children with assignment 	Involvement in Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assisting (KG) child with homework providing child time/space to do homework
		Aspirations, Expectations & Values (AVEs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> express expectation of strong schooling performance 	Aspirations, Expectations & Values (AVEs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressing aspirations for children's schooling and future occupations

DATA-GENERATED TYPOLOGIES			
SCHOOL-BASED		HOME-BASED	
Reported	Observed	Reported	Observed
School Establishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish public and private primary schools lobby and establish J/SSS for community lobby politicians/LGEA for primary and J/SSS infrastructure (e.g., well, classrooms) 	School Establishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay for after school and holiday lessons Attendance & Punctuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage morning and evening activities (e.g., <i>ilé kéwú</i>, chores, hawking) to enable attendance/adequate time for morning prep School Preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (see above) Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> act to limit children's bad associations (to prevent negative schooling influence) deliberate, consult, and carefully select children's senior secondary school transfer children from private to schoolA to increase population counsel fellow parents (e.g., at community meetings) do good re: children's schooling investigate issues on behalf of school discuss school issues at community meetings Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dismiss misbehaving holiday lessons teachers transfer info from school to community make school-relevant decisions at community meetings (i.e., encourage transfer of children from private to schoolA to increase population) introduce new HTs to key community members Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discipline child who neglects assignment or schoolwork discipline 'dull' children reprimand late children Qmqlùàbí-Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach home learning (esp. chores) so child may diligently run school errands correct child with disrespectful behaviour Spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pray with children in the morning 	Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance & Punctuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hurrying children to school (morning) beating KG children to school managing morning activities (e.g., chores, breakfast, conflicts, etc.) to enable adequate time for school prep School preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fixing child's appearance on school visit Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> having general (non-cognitive intellectual) conversations about school / schooling between parents enrolling new children at schoolA transferring children from private to schoolA questioning [other] children who do not go to school (i.e., on specific day) JSS to be nearer to home/elder sibling settling violent fights among children Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting school heads at home to discuss school issues Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> admonishing late children reprimanding child for not tucking in uniform reprimanding child's dirty uniform complaining about children who don't bathe Qmqlùàbí-Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sending children on errands teaching children how to behave teaching child ancestral (village) name Spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reminding/hurrying children to <i>ilé kéwú</i>
Repair & procurement Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> repair decrepit school infrastructure contribute furniture, fix windows, rebuild collapsing buildings, etc. 	Repair & procurement Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> repairing of collapsed classroom 		
Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay school fees make other financial contributions as required (e.g., P6 grad party) buy materials (e.g., exercise books, pencils, etc.) 	Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> paying child's entrance or PTA fees (usually through children lining up to pay after assembly, although a few parents were also observed) going to primary and J/SSS to plea for leniency on school fees delaying child enrolment due cost of fees 		
Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> instruct school to discipline (i.e., beat) late children reprimand/beat children in front of teacher e.g., for lateness, poor behaviour, etc. report children with poor home behaviour to teachers to help discipline 	Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> verbally reprimanding child in front of teachers reprimanding child for dirty uniform 		

Like teachers' expectations of parental involvement, and parents' perception of their role in schooling, the above table reveals new data-generated categories. School-based *provision*, and home-based *attendance & punctuality*, and *school preparedness* have been defined below **Table 6.3** in **6.4** while school-based *Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* and home-based *engagement*, *Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary*, *Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural* and *spiritual* have been defined below **Table 7.4**. The rest are:

School-based:

- **School establishment** – activities related to school establishment (usually in relation to the establishment of J/SSS).
- **Repair & procurement of infrastructure** – the purchase, repair, and/or construction of school physical infrastructure (e.g., purchase of chairs/desks, building repair, classroom construction, etc.).

Home-based:

- **Provision** – financial and in-kind provision for supplementary learning at home
- **Governance** – [typically] community – based decision-making practices. Includes information transfer between school leadership and community and, where necessary, discussion and resolution of school issues within community or at community forums. Also includes adherence to norms of access to communal structures.

Parents' reported practices included historical accounts (e.g., school establishment) and this and the time-bound fieldwork meant not all reported practices could be observed. However, the breadth of reported practices and the similarities between them and observed practices served to triangulate diverse data sources (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007) and demonstrated that excluding the former would underrepresent the range and scope of parents' practices. Next, I examine parents' reported and observed practices in greater detail, including their agency and choices.

8.3. The capability space: A closer look at parents' everyday involvement

This section elaborates on **Table 8.1** to provide an in-depth look, in three sub-sections, at parental practices. Using the capabilitarian method applied in **6.4.2**, the first two sub-sections include a tabular analysis of parents' school and home-based agency freedom and achievement before a discussion of each set of practices in turn. Responses to agency questions provide a sense – using both reports and observations – of the practices of selected parents with primary/JSS children in schoolA and schoolB as an aggregate (eight households in commA, seven in commB, see **Appendix A**), both of themselves and, where they infer, of other parents in their communities. The discussion, moreover, includes the practices of Father6commA and Father8commA, neither of whom had children in schoolA but with whom there were

extensive interactions. Given there is relatively limited agency achievement, the discussion in this section focuses on parental agency freedom. The final sub-section explores practices within the home-community domain which do not fit within either school or home-based schooling practices.

8.3.1. School-based practices

Parents highlighted various instances of school-based involvement, extending Barger et al. (2019)'s *participation* and *governance* to include *provision*; *Qmqlúàbí-disciplinary*; *school establishment*; and *repair & procurement of infrastructure*.

Table 8.2 Parental agency freedom and achievement: School-based practices

Everyday practices	School-based	Agency Freedom (a) <i>Is this option available to parents?</i>	Agency Freedom (b) <i>Do parents choose to pursue this option?</i>	Agency Achievement <i>Is this option being (or has this option been) achieved?</i>
Participation		Yes (commA mothers) No (most commA fathers) Yes (commB)	Often (commB) Sometimes (commA)	Partly
Governance		Yes (commA mothers) No (most commA fathers) Yes (commA mothers; commB)	Sometimes (commA mothers and Father10) Often (commB)	Partly
School Establishment		Yes	Often	Yes
Repair & procurement Infrastructure		Partly	Sometimes	Partly
Provision		Partly (few parents in full, most try to provide a proportion)	Sometimes (much of these times, part of the required amount)	No
Qmqlúàbí-Disciplinary		Yes	Often	Partly

The various observed examples of *participation* in commB, particularly by selected parents who lived nearest schoolB, suggests *participation* was available to these parents and that most of them frequently chose to pursue it. Father6 reportedly passed by schoolB and the J/SSS at least twice a week. Father5 who said he frequented schoolB three or four times a week was the most observed visitor (a minimum of seven times during fieldwork). Father4, who lived across schoolB, noted he could go to the school anytime though his visits were less frequently observed than those of Father5 and Father6 who lived a little farther away (~five- and twelve-minute walks respectively). Others like Father2 and Father3 reported it was SBMC members, like themselves, who usually checked on schoolB and fed back to other commB parents. Non-selected parents were also observed visiting schoolB. At commA, while fathers' extra-communal livelihoods took them away during the school day, the option to participate existed for commA mothers, many of whom worked at home. However, the data suggest they chose to pursue it less often than commB's similarly home-based parents. Except Mother5, who reportedly visited schoolA a few times a month, and Grandmother4, who chatted with teachers on her way to schoolA J/SSS where she worked as a food vendor, the other selected mothers reportedly only went called for PTA or other meetings (e.g., P6

graduation) which, given the schoolA leadership instability, did not occur during either fieldwork or follow-up visits. Mother1, at follow-up, became the schoolA food vendor and was therefore observed interacting with teachers daily.

Proximity to and official, as well as unofficial, relationships with schools influenced parents' decisions to visit schools. For instance, Grandmother4commA and Mother1commA were food vendors; Father5commB revealed the HT was helping him lobby for the schoolB watchman position; Father6commB disclosed the HT was his friend whom he called to discuss his mind; and Mother5commA's house was among those closest to schoolA while Fathers 2, 4, and 5 were among those nearest schoolB. Father3⁹⁸, whose home was nearest schoolB, seldom visited though he attended meetings. In addition to distance to school; location and type of livelihoods; activities in schools; school head stability and school-heads' relationships with communities (see 6.6) also appear to be important factors of parental *participation* and *governance*.

As **Table 8.1** indicates, some parents visited schools to monitor teacher attendance (see Taniguchi & Hirakawa (2016)'s 'monitoring' or Essuman & Akyeampong (2011)'s 'inspection'). This, along with the aforementioned PTA meetings, comprised parents' most-observed *governance* practices. Father10commA was the schoolA PTA Chair while Father8 occupied the same role at the J/SSS. SchoolA had no SBMC though, during the follow-up visit, the newest HT disclosed her intention to constitute one. Corroborating schoolA teachers who reported only commA mothers (albeit few) attended PTA meetings, both fathers acknowledged other fathers' extra-communal livelihoods but felt fathers could occasionally still choose to attend. Father10 notes:

we tell them that they should at least, that they too should even be staying that, occasionally... it doesn't....do (i.e., they don't listen) ... [So] it seems like it's the women who face that [school] learning. The, the men, once they give them money, ahhh, [they say] 'you're the one who knows, with your child however you can!'... what is our biggest problem in this community is that, the men are not facing the issue of [their] children enough ... like the women. (2019/02/19)

Father6, one of the now-retired transporter fathers admitted their lack of PTA meeting attendance: "ahh! I don't go to parents' meetings, it's their mothers who go, I don't go there" (2018/12/17). While in his view, the option to attend meetings was unavailable given his livelihood, he and other fathers like him had other

⁹⁸ Though the HT selected him, she thought he was amongst the uninterested parents. For her, my interview struggles with him (e.g., he once told his daughter to tell me he had gone out – after the daughter had already told me he was inside and had gone to call him) were due his lack of interest in schooling or anything without a financial 'benefit'. The AHT echoed this during a separate, casual chat between her and the HT: Father3 rarely paid fees such that his teenagers had to become economic migrants to pay their SSS fees (Fieldnotes 2019/01/16).

means of *participating*: “if...we want to do something that is development, which has now become compulsory where everyone can contribute [money], ok, I too will, it’s compulsory for me also to participate there”.

At the more rural commB where fathers were mostly farmers, PTA meeting attendance was higher though still not significant, i.e., vis-à-vis the school enrollment of 196 learners. Selected and non-selected parents alike were observed at three meetings: an aborted (due to low attendance) P6 parents’ meeting; a rescheduled one – four fathers, three mothers; and a general meeting – nine fathers, five mothers. The three parents at the aborted meeting, including Mother4, complained repeatedly about their ‘people’ who chose not to attend meetings. Mother4 noted that she asked Boychild5, and he responded that his father (Father5) said he did not have time while his mother had gone to town. In terms of roles, Father3 was the PTA Chair and the existing but non-functional SBMC was being reconstituted and included Father2 (member) and Grandmother1 (women’s representative). Other selected parents were part of the schoolB J/SSS SBMC (Father6 was the Chair while Father4 held a yet to be specified executive role).

Observations of schoolB PTA meetings revealed dynamic, bi-directional interactions between parents and teachers. While the HT/AHT presented options and offered guidance, parents discussed, argued, made decisions or deferred issues to be investigated and thereafter revisited. Occasionally, teachers interjected to correct assumptions or defend themselves e.g., when parents reported children said they don’t want to go to school at all because teachers would be absent or that they would leave home late in the morning because teachers would be late anyway (SchoolB_P6ParentsPTA 2019/02/27). Fathers outnumbered mothers at two of the three observed meetings and spoke loudest and most often though typically called upon mothers to speak once they noticed their reticence. The findings suggest that commB’s governance practices (and to some extent, commA’s) were highly gendered in terms of who participates and who speaks, the latter reflecting prevailing patriarchal norms, a finding similar to Brown & Duku (2008)’s study of parents’ *governance* practices in rural and townships schools in South Africa.

Other reported *governance* practices, as outlined in **Table 8.1**, illustrate parental use of voice, across both communities, to express schooling preferences and, occasionally, successfully lobby local governments either directly or through schools.

Of the four additional typologies – *school establishment; repair & procurement of infrastructure; provision; and Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* – *school establishment* was not observed given its historicity. Parents revealed their communities established J/SSSs (commA – 2003; commB – 2013) to reduce the financial and physical burden of school commute. Accounts of *school repairs and procurement* were also largely historical as parents, particularly commB’s, complained poverty constrained their capability to act in the present. As

discussed in **7.5.1**, two of the three schoolB classroom blocks co-constructed with government functioned to varying degrees. For the hazardous and unusable third, repairs were beyond parents' means: "It's there, our power doesn't reach. It's indeed the government who gave us the block and that sand, that they will again build it ... We didn't see them again! And money... our power doesn't reach!" (Father2commB 2019/02/21). Father3commB requested I photograph the building because the community sought assistance for its reconstruction:

Figure 8.1 SchoolB collapsed (and abandoned) classroom



At commA, parents expressed similar economic constraints. All except one classroom block were built by commA. One (pictured left in **Figure 7.5**) was in complete disrepair and abandoned while the P6 classroom beside it had no door and was full of potholes. In the past, the LGEA supported commA to construct the KG to P3 block; and plaster and roof the administrative block. By the follow-up visit, commA members' pooled resources and communal agency were visible in the blocks assembled to repair the abandoned building. At commB, the situation was unchanged as parents' resources, even when pooled, remained insufficient to convert to capabilities and thereby facilitate their agency.

Parents' reportedly limited agency for *repairs and procurement* was an extension of their limitations for everyday schooling provision, a reflection of their everyday struggles for survival. Though most selected commA and some commB parents said they paid part or all their fees, this was not without constraints and they reported many other parents in their communities could not. According to Grandfather4commB, many families struggle for survival and find it "difficult" to put food on the table, while others do not even have a "cardboard" to call their own (2019/02/04). The situation was similar in commA where "others may not have [one] Naira or Kobo, [and] they say [their children] should bring a book (i.e., an exercise book) when ... they don't have money in hand, they don't even have food to eat" (Grandmother4commA

2018/12/18). Mother5commA disclosed some parents avoid PTA meetings due to fees owed, and elaborated on their struggles:

...the school fees of some other child, the child, the mother, some other mother may not be able to pay the school fees. She doesn't have the power (i.e., capacity) to pay. Even another child who has graduated since four years to now, they didn't pay school fees to graduate, they didn't pay PTA fees, they didn't pay anything! ... They also want to do but there's just no power. (2018/12/18)

Parents' *provision* struggles were observed firsthand, suggesting that for many, the option did not really exist. Except one young father who brought two children to enrol at schoolA (and simultaneously paid their entrance fees) and the few schoolB children who stepped out during assembly to pay a token of their fees, most parents who visited schools came to plea for more time to accumulate fees (450Naira or ~ £1 per term at the time, see **Appendix G**). For some, money was a barrier to enrolment. One morning during fieldwork, a mother brought three children to enrol at schoolA: a two-year-old boy and two slightly older girls. Although reluctant to leave the boy, she was convinced by the Assistant HTs that enrolling him would enhance his school readiness. Her conviction was short lived: when informed of the entrance and term fees and the need to sew uniforms and buy supplies for each child, she quietly exclaimed, "ahh!" (Fieldnotes 2019/01/14). A few minutes later, she walked off the school compound with the boy, promising to return to pay the entrance fees for the girls.

While all parents were unequivocal about the poverty in their communities, a few echoed teachers' deficit assertions that some parents simply did not value schooling and had other functionings even where there were resources that could be converted to secure children's schooling capabilities. At the general commB PTA meeting, Father2commB admonished fathers who instead chose to spend on *òdes*:

.... Look at *Alhaji X* now, the debt he created at one time is more than 120,000 Naira! ... [*other parents chuckle*] And he'll pay all of it! ... So, what is causing it that he can't see 500Naira to pay for the children? [*HT says, "uhnnn!" and claps hands for emphasis*] ... He bought three cows, we bought them for 110,000Naira. If we didn't throw money down, would the person selling the cows have given it to us? Will we not [eventually] pay it? Please, we the men and the women, please, let us both be doing this work. The day that it is there among the money of the woman, let her to give it to the child, that this is [from] my husband. The day that the husband says that I don't have, let the wife accept it that that's the truth. (2019/03/20)

Though Father2commB advocated for an agency optimizing family capability, he ultimately returned to his critique of fathers who were "doing more responsibilities that is more than what they are carrying" and

therefore failing to keep an eye on their children. For Father4commB, fathers should be able to provide for schooling and not tell children to “go and meet [their] mother.” This, for him, demonstrated neglect of not only parental agency vis-à-vis schooling, but also towards overall responsibilities. These sentiments, along with those of Father10commA noted earlier – who thought fathers were not “facing the issue of” their children like mothers – support teachers’ earlier claims of fathers’ neglect of overall parental agency (see **6.3.1**) and the existence of gendered functionings.

Parents’ reports of school-based *discipline* were confirmed by observations of selected and non-selected parents reprimanding children in school, as outlined in **Table 8.1**, suggesting that parents pursued desired *Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* capabilities not only within *èkó ilé*, but within any space of parent-child interaction and as frequently as the option existed. For instance, Father5commB, when informed of a poorly behaving child, “reprimand[s] the child in front of the teacher, [so] that the teacher will also be happy[so] that they’ll know that, ahh, they [the parents] are ... not spoiling this child!” (2018/12/20). Alongside wanting teachers to reinforce *Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* norms (see **7.5.2**), some parents solicited teachers’ discipline when they felt theirs had become ineffective. Mother8commB recounted escorting one of her poorly behaving children to their village primary school to be disciplined by teachers while other parents agreed that children feared and obeyed teachers more than parents. Pointing at children playing nearby, Grandmother4 argued:

...You know these children are playing with sticks, no? If it were their teachers, they would have run from there! You know they’re not listening to me now? If it were their teachers, if it’s time to, if they see (i.e., at the mere sight of) them *alone*, they’ll run away! Me now, they’re not listening to me, they know that there’s an extent to which I’ll do them, but the teachers, ahh! (2018/12/18).

For Father4commB, “teachers can again talk to the children and [they] will have discipline and they (the teachers) will, they will discipline him/her more than, ehnn, the parents who are even teaching them at home” (2018/12/19).

In addition to these school-based practices, the data revealed several home-based ones. These are discussed next.

8.3.2. Home-based practices

In addition to Barger et al. (2019)’s home-based *discussion and encouragement; cognitive intellectual; and involvement in homework*, the data suggest eight other typologies: *provision; attendance & punctuality; school preparedness; engagement; governance; Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary; Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural; and*

spiritual. Like **Table 8.2**, the below table analyzes parental agency freedom around these typologies using the capabilitarian method of **6.4.2**. Each typology is thereafter discussed.

Table 8.3 Parental agency freedom and achievement: Home-based practices

Everyday Home-based Practices	Agency Freedom (a) <i>Is this option available to parents?</i>	Agency Freedom (b) <i>Do parents choose to pursue this option?</i>	Agency Achievement <i>Is this option being (or has this option been) achieved?</i>
Discussion & Encouragement	Yes	Sometimes	Partly
Cognitive Intellectual	Yes (through intermediaries)	Rarely	No
Involvement in Homework	Yes (through intermediaries)	Rarely	No
Aspirations, Expectations & Values (AVEs)	Yes	Sometimes	Partly
Provision	Yes/No (depends on the amount)	Sometimes	Partly
Attendance & Punctuality	Yes	Sometimes	Partly
School preparedness	Yes	Sometimes	Partly
Engagement	Yes	Often	Partly
Governance	Yes	Often	Yes
<i>Qmplùàbí</i> -Disciplinary	Yes	Often	Partly
<i>Qmplùàbí</i> -Socio-cultural	Yes	Always	Yes
Spiritual	Yes	Sometimes	Partly

Nearly all selected parents reportedly often asked children what they had done in school, e.g., Mother1commA said she asked all the time; and Father3commB and Father4commB daily. However, only Father4commB was observed. After asking his KG daughter, she showed him her exercise book. He glanced at it and, clapping his hands, praised her efforts and she smiled. Father5commA, though not observed asking, was observed assisting his KG daughter with her homework after school and encouraging her efforts. In the morning, Father8commA asked his JSS daughter about her school day schedule and about specific teachers. Similarly, Grandfather8commB discussed school fees with his upper primary grandchildren before they departed for school.

Such general, non-learning specific topics characterized much of observed schooling *discussions*. For instance, Boychild5commB, his brother and two boys (neighbours) were observed discussing classmates whom they felt overestimated their academic intelligence while the mother of the neighbours, for whom we all peeled cassava, interjected periodically to ask questions. At commA, the group of mother friends (Mother1, Mother2, Mother3, Mother3's co-wife), with whom I often sat outside Mother2's commercial kitchen interspersed their conversations with quips about school fees; school materials requirements; truant or out-of-school children (and the reasons for it); and whose child did what, when, and with/to whose child, among others.

Figure 8.2 The hub outside Mother2's commercial kitchen - my usual seat on the right



Though selected parents reported they could pursue *cognitive intellectual* and *involvement in homework* practices through elder children or neighbours (i.e., intermediaries) and that homework completion occurred after-school, these were rarely observed during after-school observations. Given the fieldwork schedule (discussed in **5.4.1**), commB parents' reported holiday lessons could also not be observed although the HT corroborated parents' claims when school resumed in January 2019⁹⁹. There were no observations of after-school lessons in commA though some parents (e.g., Mother1commA, Mother7commA) said they pursued these options.

Notably, one parent (Mother2commA) admitted she was often too tired after pounding several pots of cassava *fufú* to check her youngest son's schoolwork. However, later during fieldwork when her eldest son graduated from polytechnic and returned home, she noted that she often asked him to help the youngest. Nonetheless, there were a few *cognitive intellectual* and *homework* practices: Father5commA who, as already discussed, helped his KG daughter with her homework; Mother3commA who reported her KG daughter who had been repeated was inside the home doing her homework; and Grandfather8commB who twice voiced his desire to repeat Girlchild8 as he had previously done with another child (see **7.5.1**)¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹Teachers had been directed by the state to resume one week earlier than indicated in the calendar and, upon arriving at school, she found children with a holiday lesson teacher (teachers' unions advocated against the directive and the rest of the week returned to holiday).

¹⁰⁰Girlchild8 was not eventually repeated as by the follow-up stage, she was in JSS1. Such repetitions suggest increased cognitive strictness at schoolA which may explain the KG teacher's reports of increased homework completion.

Grandfather8commB moreover had a blackboard at home which, though unobserved¹⁰¹ was apparently used “all the time” to review with grandchildren after school and during holidays:

Figure 8.3 Top: video still of Father5commA assisting KG daughter with homework; bottom: Grandfather8commB’s blackboard (photo elicited)



Although most parents said they frequently asked children what they did in school, checked their books, and asked elder siblings to help with schoolwork, the data suggest these reports overestimated the infrequent, sporadic way such practices occurred in reality even when intermediaries were used. The data moreover suggests parents who themselves had schooling experiences were more specific about how they pursued *cognitive intellectual* and *homework* practices. Grandfather8commB – who had completed *Yorùbá* adult school and could therefore read and write in *Yorùbá* (the blackboard was a gift from one of his

¹⁰¹ Their house was a 35-minute walk to schoolB so visits were fewer. Moreover, on the day of Girlchild8’s after-school observation, the famished grandchildren hurriedly ate lunch before making their way to *ilé kéwú*.

teachers) – reiterated reviewing with his grandchildren and keenly monitoring their performances, to the extent of requesting or musing repetition for poor performers. Father5commA, one of the certified teachers, spoke of assisting his child with her homework (and was observed doing so) and of constantly monitoring his elder daughters' progress by reviewing exam results, report cards, etc. Father8commA, the other certified teacher, reportedly instructed (and sat with) his children to review their school and *ilé kéwú* books daily after early morning prayers. As the various observations suggest, parents' capability to choose to pursue *discussion and encouragement, cognitive intellectual and involvement in homework* practices were often constrained, even if somewhat mitigated by parents' own schooling experiences.

Though unobserved in parent-children interactions, the widespread aspirations of tertiary schooling examined in **7.4.3** suggest many parents can hold aspirations, expectations, and values (AVEs) and that they sometimes expressed them to their children. However, the findings suggest these expressions are temporal, opportuned by end of term/year assessments where children bring home report cards and created opportunities for discussions (e.g., Father2commB).

Parents' home-based *provision* primarily occurred through payment for after-school and holiday lessons, the latter of which, as earlier noted, was corroborated by the schoolB HT for commB. Before the Christmas holidays during fieldwork, commB parents explained holiday lessons were achieved through communal action as parents agreed to pay a fee per child per day to a community-based teacher. However, parents complained that its previous attempt was unsuccessful as some parents reneged on their payment (i.e., 6,000Naira per month, or about 10Naira per child per day). Thus, while the option existed for parents, only few appeared to be able to pursue it even when communal agency mitigated its individual burden.

Attendance & punctuality and *school preparedness* are interconnected and observed practices – largely around morning preparation – suggest these options existed for parents but they only sometimes pursued them. Parents were observed managing and struggling to manage children's chores in the morning in order to hurry them to school. I usually arrived at schoolA just before or after 8 a.m. (the official start time) and, proceeding directly into the community, found parents still preparing children or older ones doing chores. Only Boychild1commA and a handful of other children arrived schoolA by 8 a.m. At schoolB where my arrival time was usually after 8 a.m. (and varied greatly depending on the availability of transportation or the ease of hitchhiking), there were fewer observations of morning preparations. When I went directly to commB villages, children were still home doing chores or running errands. The days I arrived schoolB before 8:30 a.m., only a handful of children were in school. Though a few parents across both communities mentioned delaying chores to afternoons and evenings to reduce morning activities and thereby facilitate punctuality, most children of selected parents, except Boychild1commA (and to a lesser extent Boychild2commB and Girlchild6commB), were often late to school. Hygiene, a highly valued form of *school*

preparedness, was observed indirectly through parents' disciplinary practices (e.g., reprimanding or correcting poor appearance). Notably, hygiene practices were not reported though this may be because such practices are perceived as so normal as to not be worth reporting.

The data suggest parents can and often chose to *engage* through parent-to-parent interactions, including the counselling and sanctioning of one another's behaviour, such as that of Father2commB who, in the previous section, admonished others who defaulted on school fees during a PTA meeting. Others (e.g., Father5commB, Grandfather8commB, Father10commA) described similar interactions occurring outside schools, particularly at community meetings.

Likewise, parents often pursued *governance* practices during weekly (commB) and monthly (commA)¹⁰² men-only community meetings where community development (including schooling) and other issues were discussed, and decisions made. Though meetings were unobservable given the fieldwork schedule, their outcomes were. For instance, amongst the concerns of the schoolA HT during fieldwork was the school's low and dwindling population. Her expression of these to Father10 (PTA Chair) led to the communal decision that families, particularly descendants of commA, should transfer some children from the private primary (or any other private school) to schoolA. By follow-up, schoolA's attendance had grown – from a low of 50 during fieldwork – to 96 (Fieldnotes 2019/11/13). *Governance* practices also included introduction of new HTs to key community members and school heads' visits to key members' homes to discuss or resolve school-related issues. Collective patriarchal leadership is a cultural norm among *Yorùbás* whereby community-level decisions are made by male-dominated groups comprised of the most respected (based on their integrity and honesty), active (in community development), knowledgeable (of the community), and influential (high social and sometimes but not always, economic, capital), among other qualities (Famakinwa et al., 2019).

Evidently, parents' home-based *governance* and decision-making were complementary to, rather than competitive with, school-based *governance*. Given the irregularity of PTA meetings, parents used community meetings to discuss, decide, and act upon schooling-related issues – sometimes reported by children – with decisions transferred to school heads through PTA Chairpersons or SBMC members. Grandfather8commB explained:

If a child brings a complaint, ok, we'll go and say it at the meeting. Even the other, the other day, this one that passed, ehnn, the one who is in college (i.e., J/SSS), my [grand]child, bees chased them in school! ... When he got home, he told me. When I got to the [community] meeting, I told

¹⁰² I had been casually invited to commA's but the date was eventually scheduled after I had departed (i.e., after fieldwork).

the people. They have gone and made effort on it, they have killed all of them! That's what's making us hold the village / community meetings... Apart from that of the bosses (teachers) at school. (2018/12/19)

At commA, community meetings were an important alternative to PTAs, not only because the latter were seldom held, but also because most fathers' livelihoods constrained their school-based *governance* involvement. Father10commA (PTA Chairman), whose home-based work as *Ààfáà* enabled his presence at home, liaised with schoolA, relaying its concerns or messages to other fathers during community meetings, and vice versa. Decisions made at community meetings were also "compulsorily" transmitted to mothers (Father8commA 2019/11/13) who convened in their own women-only spaces (e.g., associations, savings groups, etc.) to discuss these and other community issues.

Qmqlúàbí practices were available to (and accessible by) parents and often pursued by them. School *disciplinary* practices complemented those at home. Contrary to commB teachers' reports that commB parents disapproved of school corporal punishment for poorly performing children, two parents said they punished 'dull children' (Mother7commB, Grandmother4commA) to improve their performance while another (Father6commB) stated he reprimanded children not found doing their homework at home (though no schoolB child was observed doing homework during fieldwork and no reprimand was observed). Parents' report of reprimand for lateness or soiling or disheveling uniforms were verified. Father2commB was observed interrogating three late girls on their way to schoolB one morning. During the schoolB rescheduled PTA meeting, he narrated an example of his insistence on corporal punishment for late children for whom he interceded at school:

...

Father2: [to HT] It's [been] how many times that I've brought the children of *Village X* and *Village Y* here? [to Grandfather8 of village Y] You too, I told you. It's been how many times?

HT: It's been long- it's many, even it's more than five times

Father2: It's when I want to go somewhere, like 10 a.m.-

HT: -they'll be late

Father2: I'll now be rinsing arms, rinsing legs out there at my place is when they'll now be coming...

Grandfather8: You see (i.e., can you imagine)...

OtherFather: They'll now just be coming to school...

Father2: If I now ask them, they'll say it's their father who has sent them (i.e., on errands), it's their mother who has sent...like four days ago now-

...

-do you understand? Four days ago, it wasn't more than that...when I was again rinsing my arms, legs there that they were arriving [to see me]

OtherFather (*of village X*): They're lying, they're lying against me is it!

Father2: What were you looking at till now? They said they (i.e., the school) sent them away. You'll now go home is it. I have the power to come and beg HT and she'll accept. But I won't come o! ...I can't, I can't step on God's head. What won't make me go and see her is that when I come and beg her now, and mine are not doing that! Ahh! And they now begged me, please! I said, ok, there's one [thing] remaining, if we have an agreement here, I'll go. If we [don't] have an agreement and it doesn't work, you'll go home is it. [They asked] What is that agreement? I said in front of my eyes will they beat you very well like this. They said they have already beaten them. I said no, I don't, it's not enough. If you know you're fine with it, come along-

OtherMother: -come along!

Father2: If you're not fine with it...

OtherFather: - then be going [home]!

Father2: Ahh! They said they were fine with it. [to HT] Isn't that right? Did I not bring them here?

HT: You brought them to me.

....

Grandfather4: -will they now get home and [have the audacity to] say that one (i.e., report what happened)?

(SchoolB P6PTA 2019/02/17)

...

In a similar view, Father4commB was seen upbraiding one of his sons for his unkempt appearance. Observed *socio-cultural* practices generally reflected reported ones: parents sent children on errands and corrected disrespectful behaviour, among other manifestations of *èkò ilé*. One parent, Father4commB, was even observed teaching his youngest daughter their ancestral village name.

Spiritual practices, though reportedly carried out through prayers for and with children; review of *ilé kéwú tíràs* (particularly during morning prayers); and requests to recite *tíràs*, were sometimes observed with parents who reminded, prepared, and hurried children for *ilé kéwú*, reminding them not to forget their *tíràs*.

This and the previous sub-section have examined the extent to which parents pursued school- and home-based practices to secure children's schooling capabilities. They have also alluded to practices which contest these schooling pursuits. The next sub-section explores these.

8.3.3. Contestations on children's schooling capabilities

Various practices contended with school learning in both communities for selected and non-selected parents. Given these were non-schooling practices, they were not typologized. Nevertheless, they were analyzed because of their scope and the insight they offered into parents' overall practices.

Chores (including errands) were alluded to in the previous discussion on *attendance & punctuality* and *school preparedness*. Chores were posited as the reason for children's school tardiness, particularly girls who had more morning chore responsibilities than boys (Oyinloye, forthcoming). Some parents kept children at home when they had chores for them or sought to send them on errands (see also Adelabu (2008)). Mother3commA's teenagers who attended schoolA J/SSS were often seen at home in the mornings – sometimes in their uniforms – helping operate her grinding machines. However, her younger schoolA children did not appear to have the same expectation as they were usually not seen at home during school time unless sent home (e.g., to collect fees)¹⁰³. Across both communities, and with selected and other parents, children were frequently observed doing chores, be it in the morning or after-school.

During fieldwork, various primary school-aged children were observed at home. Absent children queried by Mother2commA told her they were ill, helping parents, just absent for that day, etc. At commB, when asked why the younger children observed at home were not in school, some mothers replied children said they were ill. The data suggest some parents tacitly approved or chose not to dissuade children who exercised their co-agency to not attend school. Girlchild3, who lived nearest schoolB, was frequently absent, sometimes up to four days per week. Her home-based mother effectively approved while her father (Father3) who usually went to the farm in the mornings blamed her absence on her mother (SchoolB_AllParentsPTA 2019/03/20). But the data suggest he also chose not to enforce her attendance: I often saw him sending her on an errand or saw them seated together, peeling cassava. During one after-school interaction on a day Girlchild3 had been absent, I asked Father3 about her absence. He protested, saying, "we didn't send her on any errand!" (2019/02/27). Ironically, the assistant HT (AHT), Girlchild3's class teacher, simultaneously began to talk to Father3 from across the road where she waited for transport:

AHT: Baba, you didn't tell *Girlchild3* to come to school today?!

Father3commB: I didn't send her on any errand o! Even, that's what we are talking about now!
When she comes, you should-

AHT: -she'll meet me tomorrow! She didn't come on Monday and Tuesday, only yesterday!

¹⁰³ One day during fieldwork, Girlchild3 (P6) and her friends were sent home for allegedly owing fees. The girls found me on Mother3's porch and narrated what had occurred, reporting that the teachers were mistaken, having not kept records. They headed back to school shortly afterwards.

Father3commB: The punishment that-

AHT: Or what is it called?

Father3commB: I didn't, I didn't-

AHT: Monday, she didn't come on Tuesday, she didn't come. Was yesterday Tuesday? ... Last week now, she didn't come throughout the last week!

Father3commB: It's indeed what, it's indeed what we are talking about now with this woman!

...

AHT: ... She didn't now come today! She saw us that we were coming now, she again went to hide!

Similar tacit approval occurred at the beginning of the school term when some children told parents (and they believed) that teachers would not yet be at school and thus added an extra one or two weeks to the resumption date. Other parents were none the wiser that children who had left home for school chose not to end up there. At the general PTA meeting discussed in **8.3.1**, the commB AHT again raised the persistent issue of children's absenteeism and named children whose mothers were at the meeting. An argument ensued as the mothers insisted their children had attended school because they left home in their uniforms. Father3 defended the AHT's diligence in attendance record-keeping and, using his daughter as an example, noted it was possible that children left home and went elsewhere. Other parents corroborated Father3, revealing their observations of uniformed children outside of school, something I also occasionally observed during my walks around commB. Given attendance is recorded after the morning break – to record late comers – it is also possible some children attend in the morning and leave during the break, particularly if teachers are absent which, for most children, was a minimum twice a week.

Children were absent for other reasons such as attending occasions with parents (sometimes for multiple days) and cashew nut picking which, as discussed in **6.3.1**, was particularly high during the cashew season in the early months of the year¹⁰⁴. Children either truanted on their own or, as disclosed by schoolA children, were taken by parents to go cashew nut picking for weeks at a time. Longer 'temporary' dropouts were reported for other reasons such as disruptions caused by family deaths and parental separation (and mothers' departure from household); and cultural norms. For instance, girls temporarily dropped out to become an *omọ iyàwó* (child of the bride) for several months when they accompanied a new bride home to keep her company and assist with chores. Girls revealed that though they could also be asked by the bride, they were usually the ones who asked their parents to pursue this option, particularly if they had a favourite Aunt or elder female sibling. While commA girls noted the practice was no longer prevalent in commA and, as the data suggest, neither in commB, Mother6commB disclosed this was why Girlchild6, at

¹⁰⁴ Adelabu (2008) also identifies farming as a cause of rural children's absenteeism. Other reasons were illness, truancy and lack of school materials.

the age of 13, was just in primary⁴ – she had done *omọ ìyàwó* for about eight months – and noted with regret that she should have refused Girlchild6’s request. No other girlchild in the sample was reported to have done *omọ ìyàwó*.

CommB children appeared at higher risk of complete dropout, particularly at transition points. For instance, five of the eight children observed after school during fieldwork were in P6 and thus, expected to transition to JSS1 by the follow-up visit. However, only three were in JSS1, and though school had been in session for more than a month by then, one of the three had just resumed the week prior. The two out-of-school were Girlchild7, referenced in **6.3.1**, and Boychild5. While the latter attributed his status to his father’s inability to pay the 2019/2020 JSS1 entrance fee of 8,000Naira (excluding uniform, books, etc.), the data suggest the former’s parents had by then decided that *isẹ ọwọ* was a preferable and cheaper post-primary alternative. At commA, by follow-up, Girlchild9 (meant to be in JSS2) had effectively dropped out given her mother’s inability to afford her school fees, and her father’s decision not to support her schooling because he did not think she was smart (Mother9commA 2019/01/15). Unlike Serpell (1993) who identified rural children’s decisions to dropout in primary school due to personal feelings of failure (i.e., not being smart enough), only Mother9commA mentioned she dropped out at P6 for this reason. However, Girlchild3commB’s allusion to a neighbour who recently dropped out at JSS3 to begin *isẹ ọwọ* because he felt he was not smart enough suggests that such types of dropout still occur, though perhaps now at later transition points, where schooling’s difficulty significantly increases.

As chores reflected *ẹkọ ilé* (home learning), other contentious practices reflected this and other dimensions of parents’ ethnotheories discussed in **7.3**. Except three children who had completed, children said they attended *ilé kéwú* (Islamic schooling) Monday to Wednesday either from 2 to 4 p.m. or 3 to 5 p.m. and weekends from 7 to 9 a.m. as well as in the afternoon. Some children also said they attended morning *ilé kéwú* Monday to Wednesday, from 7 to 8 a.m. There is no *ilé kéwú* on Thursday and Friday, the Islamic weekend and in commB, there is no morning *ilé kéwú* on market day. However, after-school observations revealed high irregularities in many children’s actual *ilé kéwú* attendance. Those who went on weekdays headed off around 4 p.m. and some did not go at all because they were sent on errands or to hawk, the latter another dimension of *ẹkọ ilé*. Some children also hawked in the morning and all children who hawked did so on weekends. Of selected children, it was mostly girls who reportedly hawked: in commA, Girlchild3 (local pap), Girlchild5 and siblings (*beske*, mothers’ provisions), and Girlchild7 (*beske*); and in commB, Boychild2’s younger sister, Girlchild7, Girlchild8 and her younger male sibling. Girlchild6commB’s cousin was observed hawking (*beske*) and it is likely that Girlchild6 also hawked. Depending on the quantity of items to be sold, children might not finish hawking until around 6 p.m. or 7 p.m. which meant no *ilé kéwú* that day. For Father5commA, hawking was a chore which enhanced schooling: it taught children to make sales and equipped them with functional numeracy skills which buttressed their ability to learn formal

numeracy (2010/02/19). However, for most others parents, hawking was likely primarily a means to buttress household economic capital, as teachers suggested in **6.4**.

In addition to hawking, children went to the farm. CommA and commB children said they went to the farm on weekends and commB children (mostly boys) said they also went on weekdays before, after, or instead of *ilé kéwú*. Corroborating commB teachers who believe commB children's "lesson teacher is the *oko*" (see **6.3.1**), Grandfather8 clarified:

...Because we, we the *ará oko*, we won't want to, we won't want to buy food [out] to eat ... Hence, they [the children] will do three [types of] *isẹ* (work) daily: they'll go to school, they'll go to *ilé kéwú*, and they'll go to the *oko*. (2018/12/19)

Similarly, at the rescheduled commB P6 PTA meeting, after the note-taking teacher listed children's reasons for absenteeism such as attending *òdè* with mothers, going to market day or being sent to the farm to check cassava, one father jokingly replied, "[but] will we not eat?" (2019/02/27) (see Oyinloye (forthcoming) for a discussion of children's everyday work). Moreover, farming was not only a critical survival skill for the rural child, but it was also considered a form of *isẹ ọwọ* (handiwork) as many commB parents pursued it as their primary livelihood while those in commA used it to supplement their main livelihood.

For other types of *isẹ ọwọ*, while during fieldwork, children were generally considered too young to begin (except Girlchild7commB who had begun), by the follow-up visit, Girlchild9 had begun in commA while in commB, two had begun (Boychild2 and Boychild7) and four were about to (Girlchild3, Boychild4, Boychild5 and Girlchild8) – see **Appendix A**. Children's *isẹ ọwọ* schedule was typically Monday to Friday between 2 and 6 p.m. and Saturday morning till late afternoon (most children do not go on Sunday, except those who have a weekends-only schedule). Though many commA parents indicated they wanted to wait a few more years before enrolling children, children revealed discussions on their desired *isẹ ọwọ* type had already begun at home. Although children ultimately chose their desired *isẹ ọwọ*, parents guided or steered these choices. Fathers tended to discuss with boys, and mothers with girls. After disclosing his *isẹ ọwọ* choice of 'rewire' – a type of mechanic who fixes vehicle wires and lights –, Boychild2 elaborated:

Boychild2: My elder sibling, she is called *Aunty X*, it is tailor that she learned, and it was that work I first desired before we now put me in 'rewire'.

B: Ok, it was the work of tailor that you first wanted to do? [*He nods*]. Why did you then change to rewire?

Boychild2: It was my Daddy who said I should not learn the work of tailor that since two of my elder siblings are already doing the work of tailor, that I also should not do the work of tailor, that I should do the work of 'rewire'. (2019/11/15)

Parents then explored their social networks for reputable and trusted master trainers. They also negotiated children's scheduling and learning duration which varied depending on the type of *isẹ ọwọ* and children's other obligations (e.g., schooling, *ilẹ kéwú*, chores, etc.) which affected their attendance fidelity. For instance, tailoring on an afternoon/weekend schedule was typically negotiated for 3years but often took longer because of children's irregular attendance. Fathers typically paid enrolment costs: a two-part payment consisting of proof of enrolment form fee (typically 1,000Naira) and the actual enrolment fee which varies depending on the type of *isẹ ọwọ*. Parents provide children's transport and break money and fathers are usually responsible for graduation ('freedom') costs (a fee negotiated between parents and master trainers, often a minimum 20,000Naira¹⁰⁵) and, where relevant, any equipment required for startup of the micro-enterprise. The data suggest that teachers' assertion that fathers were uninterested in schooling but interested in *isẹ ọwọ* may not be unfounded. For instance, some of the commA mothers (Mother1, Mother2, Mother3 and Mother7) who lamented the cost of schooling and disclosed "there is no 'assist'" for their schooling struggles were the same ones who disclosed it was fathers who paid children's *isẹ ọwọ* costs.

Except hawking which, as discussed, may also be perceived as enabling, children's extremely busy schedules – chores, *ilẹ kéwú*, farming, hawking and *isẹ ọwọ* – created conflicts and constrained their schooling capabilities, given schooling's rigid schedule and after-school requirements of review and assignment completion. As already noted, children's schooling attendance was inconsistent, and many were often late. At both schools, a considerable proportion of the morning assembly was spent beating (or threatening) latecomers¹⁰⁶. And except Mother3commA and Father5commA's KG children, no observed child (upper primary) reported or was seen doing homework after-school before *ilẹ kéwú* though when prodded, all children replied they did it in the evening before bedtime. The lack of observations of homework completion further corroborates teachers' perceptions of limited parental agency around this practice¹⁰⁷, as discussed in **6.4.2**.

¹⁰⁵ Poverty is as much as barrier to *isẹ ọwọ* freedom as it is for schooling though the former has a more flexible payment structure (as discussed in **7.3**). For instance, Boychild5commB, who had still not begun JSS1 at follow-up, had an elder sister who was then working in *Lagos* to accumulate her *isẹ ọwọ* freedom fees.

¹⁰⁶ The ethical implications of these were considered. However, given the study's *Ọmọlúàbí* moral ethical framework, I chose not to react to these observations because I did not want to superordinate my own worldview. I discuss this further in Oyinloye (2021).

¹⁰⁷ Homework is not typically assigned at the community *ilẹ kéwú* most children attend, though it may be at more contemporary ones. However, as already discussed, children may review their *tíràs*, under parental or elder sibling guidance. Homework is therefore 'novel' not only because parents lack schooling experience but possibly also because it did not feature in the *ilẹ kéwú* some parents did attend (and that all were familiar with).

Some parents were aware of some of the contestations. Noting the different effect of absenteeism on formal and elementary Islamic schooling, Father2commB cautioned other parents during the rescheduled P6 meeting:

.... If a child doesn't come to *ilé kéwú* in three months, ...where s/he's left her *tírà* ...is where s/he'll find it.... That of school is not like that o! ... [With *ilé kéwú*] If a child is at the... like that [stage of] *kariatu*...it's him and another one who are going, it's two of them who are going. He now didn't come. Those [other] ones have gotten to like 'seven', all of what is the *kariatu* is what he'll carry (i.e., where he'll continue from) ... He hasn't [fallen] 'short', he'll [continue to] carry it [where he left off]! You see that of school, the child who doesn't come this week has touched the ground (i.e., fallen behind)! When it's next week, when he comes on Monday today, it's what the others are doing today is what he'll be doing o... (2019/02/27)

The other six parents present (three mothers and three fathers, including Grandfathers 4 and 8) murmured and nodded their agreement. Nearly a month later at the all parents' PTA meeting, after admonishing parents whose chores and errands affect children's tardiness and absenteeism, Father2 again argued that one (home learning) would be "blocking the other" (schooling) if not in terms of availability of time, but in the extent of learning. However, the same Father2 also alluded to parents' perception of the complementarity, rather than contention, of the different learning forms when he spoke of parents' reprimand: "we use it to reprimand them even, [we say to them] we give you *kéwú*, we're giving you schooling, how (why) did you behave like this?" (Father2commB 2018/12/19).

No parent explicitly mentioned a contention between schooling and *isé ɔwɔ* though this might be because, as noted in 7.3, parents perceived no limitations with *isé ɔwɔ*. When asked how children enrolled in *isé ɔwɔ* managed their schooling assignments, Father7commB stated they would complete it before going to *isé ɔwɔ* in the afternoon or could schedule their *isé ɔwɔ* for weekends only (2019/11/18). Father6commB added that children would do it after returning from *isé ɔwɔ* in the evening (2019/11/22) while Father2commB himself suggested that children could hasten to do it at school before coming home (2019/11/21). However, alluding to a contention between schooling and *isé ɔwɔ*, at least in terms of a scheduling burden, Father6commB recommended that government integrate *isé ɔwɔ* into the primary schooling curriculum so that children begin learning together and as early as possible (2018/12/06).

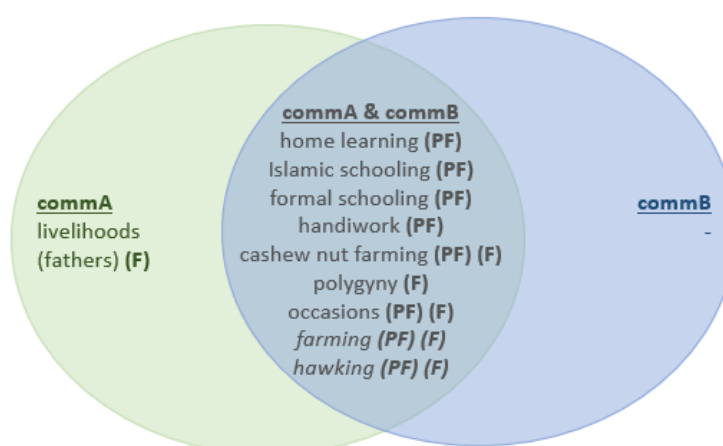
This section has examined parental agency freedom to pursue everyday schooling practices in school and at home. It has revealed parents always chose to *socialize* children and often chose to *participate, establish schools, discipline, engage* with others and *govern* (particularly in their communities) towards the realization of children's schooling capabilities. It has revealed constraints to parental agency freedom in

repair & procurement, and *provision* and *governance*, the last two which parents attempted to mitigate through communal agency. It has also revealed parents exercised the least agency around *cognitive intellectual* and *involvement in homework* though parents who had some schooling experience appeared to exercise greater agency around these. Finally, it has uncovered various practices which contend with schooling, including children's own co-agency freedom to not attend school. The specificity of reports of parental engagement with *isé ɔwɔ*, which most parents themselves learned, offered further support for the positive influence of parents' learning experiences on their agency freedom vis-à-vis specific learning forms. In the next section, I examine the social space and how it underpins parental agency freedom around schooling and non-schooling practices.

8.4. The social space and the capability space

The data suggest the options that selected and other parents are pursuing (and trying to pursue), including those which contend with schooling, expand parents' and parental functionings, as illustrated below:

Figure 8.4 Parents' views on parents' (F) and parental (PF) functionings



Farming and hawking are included for emphasis and italicized given, as already noted, farming is valued as both a dimension of *home learning* as well as *handiwork* while hawking is valued as a form of *home learning*. As can be seen, these functionings align strongly with those teachers perceived parents held, as illustrated in **Figure 6.2**. However, selected commB parents did not specify *early marriage* and the diagram suggests there is greater similarity between communities than teachers suggested.

The study's conceptual framework (3.6) postulates that within social fields, objective structures, habitus and forms of capital underpin what social agents value. The findings suggest parents' and parental functionings overall were determined by the intersection of *habitus (parental ethnotheories and cultural norms)*, *parents' earlier experiences (or lack) of schooling*, and wider structures. Functionings emerging

from parental ethnotheories, i.e., home learning, handiwork, formal schooling, and elementary Islamic schooling, have been explained in **7.3** and **7.4** as a dimension of habitus: the historicized shared thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions of social agents within a field. However, some of these values are also the product of the wider structures within the field of power.

For instance, hawking, a dimension of *home learning*, is also a condition of poverty – due to local-national economic and political structures – which necessitates children’s contribution to the household economy (Oyinloye, forthcoming). Likewise, handiwork has always been valued but the post-colonial expansion of schooling (and the resulting high income-generating opportunities, e.g., in white-collar jobs) reduced its appeal, particularly among the non-rural (Obidi, 1995). However, Nigeria’s current extreme and protracted unemployment (see **2.2**) has propelled its resurgence among both the rural and urban. Handiwork is now valued because for the schooled and wage employed, it may be pursued as a supplementary source of income, while for the unschooled, and the schooled but unemployed, it is the primary source of income. Some commA mothers (e.g., Mother2 and Mother7) reported it was teachers who advised them to supplement children’s schooling with handiwork. Indeed, during fieldwork, after listing all the amenities schoolB did not have such as library, teaching aids, computers and sewing machine (the last two being examples of handiwork), the HT retorted, “or is it book (i.e., school) one will use to eat?” (Fieldnotes 2019/01/31).

Perceptions of the inevitability of schooling (**7.4.1**) are likely the result of the global-national expansion of schooling which has led to a broadening of parental ethnotheories to include schooling (Oyinloye, forthcoming). Notably, and as highlighted in **7.6**, parents’ valuing of schooling was also underpinned and enabled by regrets over their own lack of schooling. Except the two commA parents who had teaching certification, all selected parents wanted the schooling for their children which their own parents did not give them. Father6commA spoke of the pain of being unschooled (see footnote **90**) and Father6commB, its sadness. Others cited various consequences of lack of schooling – suffering, being cheated, servitude (of others) and future disappointments – which they did not want their children to experience. Father6commB exclaimed that it was a “terrible thing!” for his children not to go to school when he himself had not (2019/11/22) while Grandmother4commA remarked, “Ahh! We, we’re emaciated, we are not begging that our children will also be emaciated!” (2018/12/10).

The high valuing of elementary Islamic schooling is poignant, given most selected parents, despite being Muslims, did not themselves attend elementary Islamic schooling (**Appendix A**) and learned to pray from family and peers. It can be argued and the data supports that, like formal schooling, parents’ valuing of elementary Islamic schooling is also due to their lack thereof. However, scholars have also suggested this valuing (of Islamic schooling and other modes of Islamic piety) represent Muslims’ response to the success

of Christian Pentecostalism in Nigeria which is viewed by Muslims as a form of religious political competition (Obadare, 2016). One of those modalities called *asàlátù*¹⁰⁸ – an extended Sunday morning service akin to the Pentecostal Sunday morning church service (Janson, 2020) – was reportedly regularly attended by Girlchild6commB and other commB children and likely also exists in commA.

Supporting teachers' views around gendered functionings, polygyny was valued by fathers (for themselves) as a religious, social and cultural norm. Occasions were valued by both mothers and fathers as a social and cultural norm for themselves and children which, particularly for children, facilitates home learning objectives of communal relationality and existence.

The conceptual framework also suggests that within fields, objective structures, habitus, and forms of capital influence what social agents do. The aforementioned structures also operate in the intervals within the capability space, mediating the choices that parents can choose to pursue and thus, the functionings they can achieve. Parents disenfranchised by Nigeria's steep unemployment and their (and teachers') perceptions of a poorly managed public schooling system which produced graduates with little functional skills (6.5.1 and 7.4.4), adapted their preferences and chose to either pursue handiwork instead of or in addition to schooling. In such contexts, adapting preferences away from schooling, particularly at the post-primary level where this often occurs in the study contexts, is a "rational" rather than ignorant response, especially for poor families (Palmer et al., 2007, p. 91).

Nevertheless, for parents who pursued schooling, its high cost and their limited economic resources (poverty) directly constrained their practices around *provision; repair & procurement of school infrastructure*; and indirectly around *discussion and engagement*; and *cognitive intellectual*. Within the basic schooling subfield, resources appeared to play a more explicit role in parental agency freedom than in agency goal formation as its absence significantly constrained what parents were able to do even when they formed a value for schooling. Lack of schooling experience constrained *cognitive* and *homework involvement* while physically demanding livelihoods placed limits on *cognitive involvement* as well as *discussion and encouragement*.

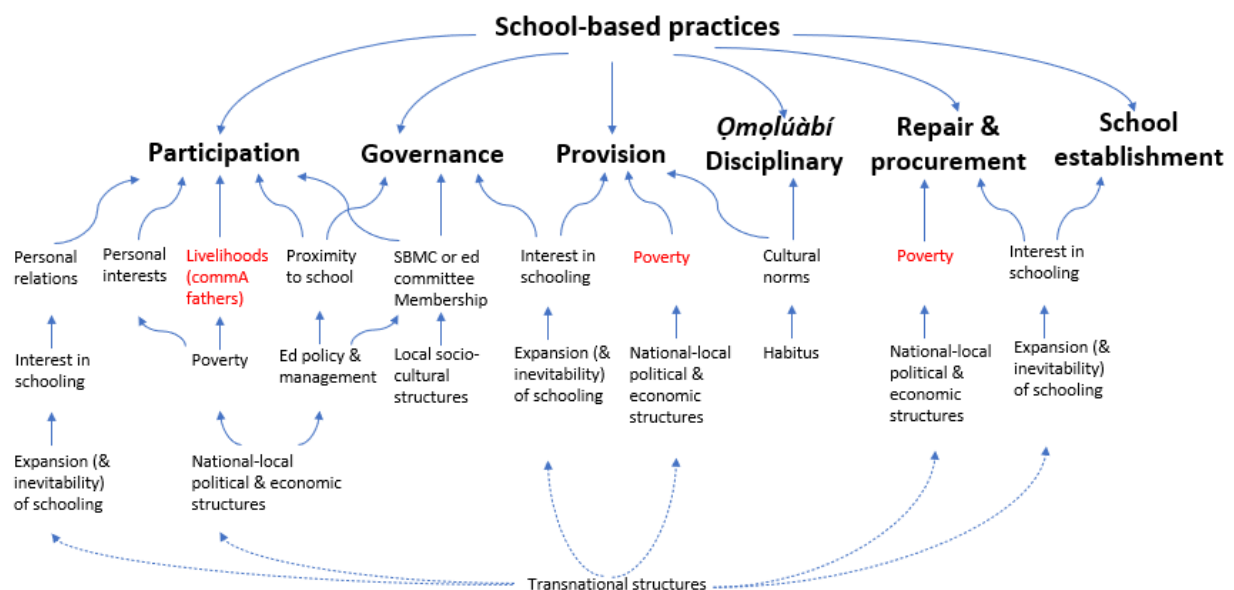
Parents' habitus which valued multiple forms of learning and occasions constrained their practices around children's *attendance & punctuality*, *school preparedness*, and *provision*. But these same structures deepened parental agency freedom. For instance, communities' collective existence (3.4.1) facilitated parental communal agency towards *cognitive intellectual* activities and high resource needs practices such

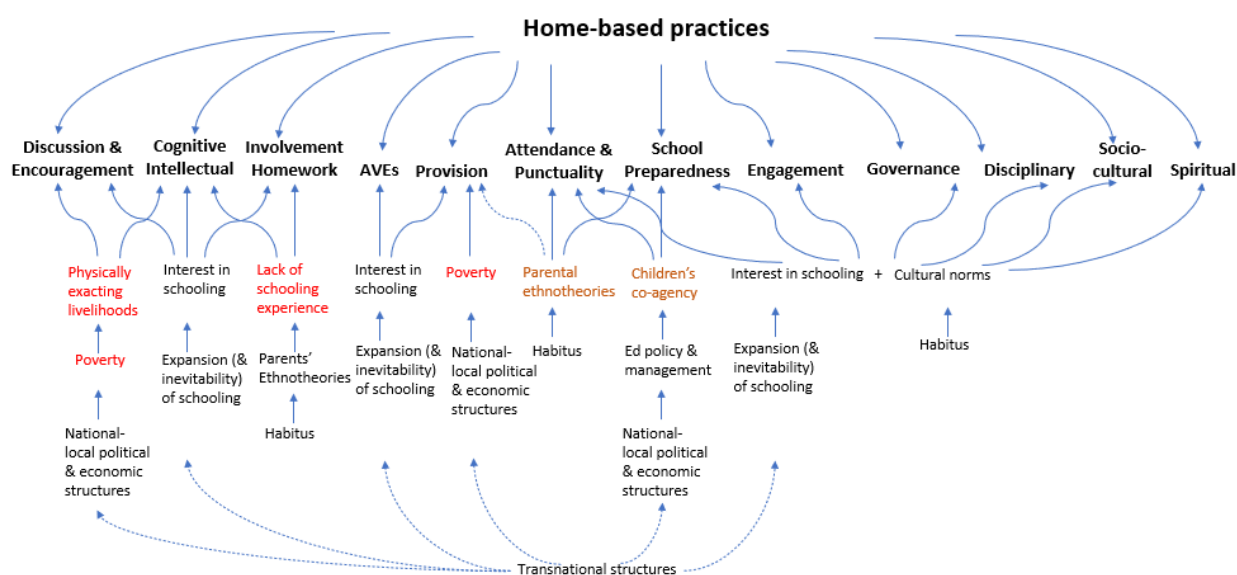
¹⁰⁸ Abdussaam (2012) notes that *Kwara's al-asalatu* groups have other objectives e.g., visiting the sick, managing burial grounds and spreading Islam. Girlchild6commB initially reported their *asalatu* occurred on Saturdays then admitted she didn't remember the day. Nevertheless, she was certain it was on a non-schooling day.

as *school establishment* and *repair & procurement of infrastructure*. This collectivism, moreover, facilitated home-based *governance*, engendering a home-school relationship non-contingent on (though complementary to) official school-driven forums like PTA and SBMC meetings. Notably, children's co-agency enabled parental co-agency freedom – when children chose to attend school – and hindered it – when children chose to be truant.

The range of influences on parents' schooling practices are illustrated in **Figure 8.5** (constraining influences in red; enabling & constraining influences in orange; and enabling influences in black). Though the diagrams illustrate more enablers than constraints, the weight of the constraints are substantive and, in some cases, overshadow the effects of enabling influences. Objective transnational structures, i.e., the 'powerful' international or global structures, dominate the volume and the structures of resources across fields and foster a normative discourse of schooling (which permeate nationally) even as they accrue larger proportions of economic resources vis-à-vis national structures.

Figure 8.5 Influences on everyday parental involvement practices in school and at home





The findings of this chapter suggest greater parental agency freedom towards schooling than teachers perceived (see 6.5.1). Nevertheless, they support teachers' perception of three dimensions of parental agency, namely, those who value schooling, choose to pursue it but are constrained in their pursuits (*constrained schooling pursuits*); those who value schooling but have become disenfranchised and have thus adapted their preferences to make trade-offs to pursue non-schooling endeavours (*forced trade-offs adaptive preferences or adaptive pursuits*); and those who appear to neither value nor choose to pursue schooling (*non-schooling pursuits*). The data suggest all parental choices, including non-schooling ones, are subject to constraints; and that adaptive pursuits begin to surface at the transition from primary to JSS when both the actual and opportunity cost of schooling significantly increases.

The findings around contentious practices, particularly those around handiwork which parents perceive as also significantly enhancing children's functional capabilities towards economic self-reliance, suggest a fourth dimension of parental agency: those who value schooling *and* other functionings and, rather than make trade-offs, choose to pursue multiple functionings simultaneously (*expanded pursuits*). Notably, all parents express value for pursuits others than schooling (e.g., handiwork) even if they do not always choose to pursue them. Expanded pursuits remain subject to constraints given the volume of parents' resources do not necessarily increase alongside their expanded choices. As the previous section demonstrates, existing resources are merely redistributed across an expanded set of choices and pursuits. And contrary to teachers' perceptions that most parents neither valued nor pursued schooling (non-schooling pursuits), parents' data suggest most parents pursued *expanded pursuits*. **Figure 8.6** illustrates the four dimensions of parental agency relevant to schooling:

Figure 8.6 The four dimensions of parental agency around schooling

Parental Functioning		Parental Agency Freedom (Pursuit)		Parental Agency Dimension
Schooling	Others	Schooling	Other pursuits	Type of constrained pursuit
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Expanded pursuits
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Schooling pursuits
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Adaptive pursuits
No	Yes	No	Yes	Non-schooling pursuits

This section has unpacked the social structural and capital influences on parental agency goal formation and parental agency freedom, highlighting the various constraints parents face and their pursuits in spite of these to maximize their children's learning capabilities. The next section discusses the chapter's findings.

8.5. Chapter discussion and conclusion

This chapter has examined parents' schooling practices in-depth, exploring parents' available and accessible opportunities, their choices and their pursuits. The findings revealed several insights, much of it previously unexamined in the literature. First, like their perspectives, rural parents' practices are largely missing in the literature due to the underrecognition of the breadth (i.e., variety) and scope (i.e., classification) of these practices. As demonstrated in 3.3 (and **Chapter 6**), non-literate, non-numerate, rural parents are generally deficiently perceived by teachers, officials, and even students as not valuing and, by extension, not involved with schooling. The scarce evidence around such parents' practices is usually limited to provision i.e., the provision of books, payment of fees, etc. (e.g., Tusiime et al., 2016), practices which this thesis also demonstrate. However, few studies have explored parents' provision constraints in-depth or provided insights into the ways some parents navigate such constraints, e.g., through communal agency. Few studies have also examined the more subtle dimensions of parental involvement, particularly parents' use of older children as intermediaries (see, for example, Spernes, 2011) or their enforcement of socio-cultural elements to further children's learning capabilities. Evidence of rural parental involvement – typically resource-centric (i.e., money, labour, etc.) – can also be gleaned from the literature on community participation (e.g., Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Kendall, 2007; Kendall et al., 2015; Rose, 2003; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016) though, as previously argued, these only offer a partial view.

The limitation of the literature, particularly that from less industrialized contexts in Africa and Latin America, is also evidenced by the narrow scope of practices typically discussed which offer no insight into the diversity of involvement in such contexts (Kim, 2018). Though this study applied a global typology which included East Asian countries (Barger et al., 2019), the typology was found to undercategorize rural parental involvement by excluding more basic (e.g., *attendance & punctuality* and *school preparedness*),

collective (*engagement* and *governance*), socio-cultural (*Qmqlúàbí-disciplinary* and *Qmqlúàbí-socio-cultural*) and spiritual categories. Importantly, parents in this study also established and constructed schools, practices which they did not role construct (i.e., that they did not believe they should be doing, see also Kendall (2007)). In contexts of limited national-state-local resources and perceived poor education management due to corruption¹⁰⁹, communities/parents are often left to expend significant economic capital towards government-owned public schooling. Unlike definitions of parental involvement (3.2) which construe involvement as parental support for children's school learning, these parents also have to support school quality improvement. Such responsibilities, typically borne by states in more industrialized contexts, are taken for granted, a possible reason for their omission in typologies such as Barger et al.'s.

Second, communal agency is notable in enabling parental agency freedom. While the economic capital constraints facing poor parents have been identified in the literature (e.g., Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Ibrahim & Jamil, 2012; Lemmer, 2007; Tusiime et al., 2016), none of these studies demonstrate how parental communal action contributes to the realization of parental involvement. This is despite evidence of the positive effect of collective action on poor people's efficiency and power in other areas (Stewart, 2005). Notably, parental communal agency in this study, particularly in terms of *governance*, redistributed power between school and communities towards the latter, where decisions were made within communities and communicated with schools. This finding suggests greater power-sharing between schools and communities (and within communities), unlike Masko & Bosiwah (2016) and Rose (2003) who found power remained within schools, and Essuman & Akyeampong (2011) who found power remained with schools and the few local 'elites'¹¹⁰ who aligned with them. As the findings demonstrate, teachers, all of whom were *Yorùbá* were expected, as cultural agents, to adhere to the prevailing socio-cultural norms within school-communities, including norms of access and community-based decision making by (generally male) community leaders whose alignment with schools was not always guaranteed.

Third, this chapter demonstrated parents' significant engagement with learning outside of school, particularly in relation to informal apprenticeships. In their study on informal apprenticeships in West and Central Africa (excluding Nigeria), Haan & Serrière (2002) found that parents engaged by selecting trainers, negotiating (typically oral 'apprenticeship contract[s]' (ILO, 2012, p. 12)) and, where possible, paying fees. However, generally, there is limited evidence on the softer dimensions of parental engagement within the informal apprenticeships literature. Moreover, unlike the concerted parental agency freedom around apprenticeships (towards expanding children's capabilities) demonstrated in this study, others suggest apprenticeships are sometimes perceived by trainers and (some parents) as a way for parents to abdicate

¹⁰⁹ Nigeria ranks 146th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index

¹¹⁰ Described as 'opinion leaders' or influential community members who are neither chiefs, elders or SMC members.

their schooling responsibilities or only as a pathway for poorly performing youth or those whose parents cannot afford further schooling (Aryeetey et al., 2011). Notably, unlike Haan & Serrière who suggest parents prefer to enrol children in apprenticeships after primary schooling, this study found that such a *phased* pathway – completion of primary, secondary, or tertiary schooling before fulltime enrolment – is not the only option available to parents. A *combined* pathway – school in the morning, and apprenticeships in the afternoons, weekends or during school holidays – was most prevalent. Those whose children enrolled after tertiary schooling (e.g., Mother2commA and Father8commA) expressed regret at not having pursued the combined pathway. A (non-existent) *blended/integrated* pathway – school-based apprenticeships training, beginning in upper primary – was also desired.

Fourth, the findings on limited parental agency freedom around *cognitive intellectual* and *homework involvement* practices resonate with literature which demonstrates that poor and/or busy parents with exacting livelihoods are too physically and mentally exhausted to support homework or other cognitive activities (e.g., Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Stephinah, 2014). The findings also resonate with literature which suggests a link between parents' schooling experience and their confidence in their ability to cognitively support children (Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Spernes, 2011; Tusiime et al., 2016). Though this study suggests unschooled parents may pursue these practices through intermediaries, the findings ultimately question whether, as Kim (2018) notes, it is reasonable to expect somewhat schooled parents with challenging live contexts to pursue these practices instead of focusing their energies on securing children's livelihoods.

Lastly, and relatedly, the revelation of economic, political, and transnational structural constraints underscore the limits of parental involvement, even where options exist and parents may choose, pursue, and achieve all involvement practices. On the one hand, in contexts of significantly weak education quality like this study, much more than parental involvement in schooling is required to meaningfully facilitate children's school learning. On the other hand, in contexts where structural conditions constrain the translation of schooling into desired employment outcomes, also like this study, equitable structural measures are required to create labour market opportunities, particularly for children of the poor. In these contexts, while parental involvement may make a strong symbolic statement to teachers – and possibly function evaluatively (3.5.3) – and is likely to be important for children's engagement, motivation, and non-academic outcomes (3.2), the degree to which it can strongly positively affect children's academic achievement and future schooling outcomes remains uncertain. In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I draw some conclusions, outline the study's various contributions, and suggest some future directions for research.

Chapter 9. Discussion and conclusion

9.1. Introduction

The previous chapter concluded the in-depth exploration of teachers' and parents' perspectives on, as well as parents' practices around, children's schooling. This chapter concludes this thesis by synthesizing the findings presented in the last three chapters and outlining the study's contributions. First, it summarizes the answers to the research questions and highlights important new insights. Then, it presents the study's theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. Thereafter, it highlights the study's limitations and sets out implications for research, practice and policy. Suggestions for further research are provided before the study concludes with some closing remarks.

9.2. Key findings

9.2.1. Summary of main findings

Research question 1

How do teachers in rural, public primary schools in Kwara state perceive the parents of the children who attend their schools?

Teachers believed most parents, especially fathers, generally do not value schooling. The few mothers who were believed to value schooling were perceived constrained in their agency freedom given the polygynous households in which they lived.

Largely, teachers perceived little parental agency vis-à-vis schooling and, to some extent, recognized the economic and socio-cultural constraints underpinning this condition.

Teachers' expectations aligned with Barger et al. (2019)'s typology but revealed new data-generated categories: school-based *provision*; home-based *attendance & punctuality* and *school preparedness*

Like the extant literature, teachers held deficit views of parents. However, their recognition of parents' constraints, and affective acts towards learners and parents empathized these deficit views.

Chapter 6 revealed teachers generally perceived parents were uninterested in and did not value children's schooling because they valued other beings and doings, some of which were not on behalf of children. SchoolA teachers believed commA parents valued *cashew nut farming* and fathers, their *livelihoods* while schoolB teachers believed commB parents valued *farming* and *early marriage*. Both groups moreover believed fathers valued *polygyny*; and parents, *handiwork* and *occasions*. *Livelihoods*, *occasions*, and *polygyny* were believed to be valued by parents for themselves. For teachers, father-attributed (and thus, gendered) functionings contested mothers' parental capabilities. Teachers, particularly females in polygynous households, acknowledged mothers valued schooling but faced significant constraints to their agency freedom, given the polygyny of their households which reduced mothers' share of the household

capital. Though teachers' views of parents resonated with the predominantly deficit views in the literature reviewed in **3.3, Chapter 6** argued such nuances suggested teachers' perspectives were *also* empathetic.

Unsurprisingly, teachers' views of parents' functionings aligned with their perception of parental agency freedom vis-à-vis schooling, which teachers believed was little or non-existent. For instance, while schoolB teachers admitted few parents asked about absent teachers or dropped by to see the school head (two commB fathers were singled out as positive examples), they believed most parents preferred to send children to elementary basic Islamic schooling, the farm, to learn handiwork, or to marry them off in pre-pubescence. Teachers at both schools shared their expectations of parents which, using Barger et al. (2019)'s adapted typology, were school-based *participation* and *governance*; and home-based *discussion and encouragement*, *cognitive intellectual* and *homework involvement*. New categories were also generated from the data: school-based *provision*; and home-based *attendance & punctuality* and *school preparedness*. These expectations were in light of teachers' recognition of structural and habitus constraints to parental agency freedom around schooling: constrained choices (*constrained schooling pursuits*); forced trade-offs adaptive preferences (*adaptive pursuits*); and lack or limited valuing of schooling (*non-schooling pursuits*). Recognition of constraints deepened teachers' empathy, manifested in acts of care towards children and parents. The chapter thereafter argued that teachers' varied and empathetic perspectives were influenced by their stereotypical perceptions of rural lives; personal experiences of polygyny; extensive knowledge of school-communities; and personal experiences of the country's wider structural challenges.

Research question 2

<i>What are the perspectives, on schooling, of parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in Kwara state?</i>	Parents articulated ethnotheories of learning 'inside' (and around) the home (<i>èkọ ilé</i>) and 'outside': elementary Islamic schooling (<i>ilé kéwú</i>); handiwork (<i>isẹ ọwọ</i>); and schooling (<i>ilé ìwé</i>).
	Their ethnotheories resulted in various desired learning capabilities for children, the most important being <i>Ọmọlúàbí</i> (the epitome of character).
	Parents perceived schooling as inevitable but felt its outcomes took too long to manifest and predominantly benefited children of the rich.
	All parents were critical of the physical quality of their primary school; some of teachers' frequent absenteeism and unpunctuality; and some of the inadequacy of school subjects.
	Parents assessed children's learning in varied ways, including through symbol recognition, reading fluency, and neatness of children's writing.
	<i>Ọmọlúàbí</i> was elicited not only amongst parents' perception of their responsibilities in relation to schooling but also amongst their perception of teachers' responsibilities.

Chapter 7 amplified parents' voices and provided them the opportunity to figuratively respond to teachers' perspectives. The findings revealed parents across both communities held complex, pluralistic and interconnected ethnotheories of learning comprising learning 'inside' and around the home (*èkọ ilé*) and

‘outside’ through elementary Islamic schooling (*ilé kéwú*); handiwork or informal apprenticeships (*isẹ ọwọ*); and schooling (*ilé ìwé*). These various learning forms, for parents, engendered desired learning capabilities for children. For *ẹkọ ilé*, these were *Ọmọlúàbí*; functional (skills and knowledge); and physical, domestic, and environmental capabilities. For *ilé kéwú*, spiritual, psychological, economic self-reliance and *Ọmọlúàbí*. For *ilé ìwé*, social mobility, social recognition, social confidence, economic self-reliance, political recognition, functional, psychological, linguistic competence, modern life participation, social justice and *Ọmọlúàbí*. And for *isẹ ọwọ*, economic self-reliance, social justice, *Ọmọlúàbí* and functional. The chapter argued that *Ọmọlúàbí*’s appearance across all learning forms demonstrated its centrality to parents who also highly valued economic self-reliance (this appeared across all but home learning).

The chapter then discussed key themes around parents’ perspectives on schooling. First, parents perceived an inevitability of schooling for meaningful participation in contemporary life. Second, schooling was analogized to an investment whose return takes long to realize, if at all. Third, challenges around the process (e.g., quality) and outcomes (employment) of schooling were believed to disproportionately impact poorer families, constituting a social injustice deepened by the unfair [judicial] justice meted out to poor youth. Despite these constraints, the findings revealed parents persisted with schooling precisely because of its inevitability; its eventual return (i.e., usefulness); and its potential, due to functional skills and knowledge, to facilitate *isẹ ọwọ* and other livelihood pursuits.

Further challenging teachers’ deficit perceptions of rural, non-literate and non-numerate parents as lacking knowledge about schooling, parents lamented the poor physical state of their children’s schools; teachers’ fickle attendance and punctuality; and the inadequacy of taught subjects which, unlike *isẹ ọwọ*, were perceived unable to secure children’s economic self-reliance. Notwithstanding, parents reported being satisfied with schools’ overall teaching and children’s learning – given children’s periodic assessment reports – but acknowledged their inability to assess children’s everyday learning because of their own lack of schooling. The findings illuminated other ways parents assessed children’s learning: elder children or neighbours’ assessments; children’s ability to write and read parents’ dictates; neatness of children’s writing; and children’s ability to speak English, write letters of the alphabet, write own names, and read names and numbers on mobile phones. Perhaps unsurprisingly, parents’ assessments extended towards other learning forms, specifically *ilé kéwú*. The chapter concluded by exploring parents’ role construction relative to teachers’, illustrating again the central importance of *Ọmọlúàbí* due to parents’ expectations of teachers’ reinforcement of *Ọmọlúàbí* disciplinary and socio-cultural capabilities in children at school.

Research question 3

<i>In what ways are parents of children in primary schools in rural communities in Kwara state involved with their children's schooling?</i>	Parents' practices aligned with and extended the adapted Barger et al. (2019) typology to reveal data-generated categories, some resonant with their ethnotheories.
	New school-based categories comprised <i>school establishment, repair & procurement of school infrastructure, provision</i> and <i>Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary</i> .
	New home-based categories were <i>provision, attendance & punctuality, school preparedness, engagement, governance, Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary, Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural</i> and <i>spiritual</i> .
	Parents had highest agency freedom around <i>Qmqlùàbí</i> related practices and least agency freedom around <i>cognitive intellectual</i> and <i>homework involvement</i> .
	Parents experienced significant constraints around practices which required economic capital, though they tried to mitigate these using their communal agency.
	Communal norms facilitated home-based parental agency, particularly for fathers whose extra-communal livelihoods constrained school-based practices.
	Parents, including fathers, demonstrated significant parental agency freedom towards children's non-schooling pursuits.
	Structures, habitus and parents' schooling experiences underpinned what parents valued. The same structures, capital and habitus influenced their agency freedom.

Chapter 8 provided in-depth insight into parents' everyday involvement in schooling. Combining parents' reports of involvement practices with those observed, the findings demonstrated practices corresponding with Barger et al. (2019), but like teachers' expectations, uncovered new ones: school-based *school establishment, repair & procurement of school infrastructure, provision* and *Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary*; and home-based *provision, attendance & punctuality, school preparedness, engagement, governance, Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary, Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural* and *spiritual*. Parental agency freedom varied across these mostly recurrent, everyday practices. Only *school establishment* was achieved in both communities.

The findings suggested parents had higher agency freedom for school-based *participation* (commB), *governance* (commB), and across both communities, *Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* and home-based *encouragement, governance, Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary* and *Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural*. Parents demonstrated the least agency freedom with home-based *cognitive intellectual* and *homework involvement*, though those with schooling experience appeared to have more agency freedom than those without. School and home-based *provision* were also limited and when they occurred, often incomplete.

Unsurprisingly, parents reported greater agency freedom than teachers recognized, and the findings demonstrated, in line with the literature reviewed in **3.2**, an underrecognition of home-based practices. Particularly, the findings showed that parents mediated constraints to schooling agency freedom through communal agency (to pool resources for *provision* and *repair & procurement*) and communal norms such as communal meetings (for *governance* and *engagement*). The latter proved especially important for fathers whose extra-communal livelihoods limited school-based *governance* and *participation*. The chapter

moreover uncovered considerable parental agency freedom in their engagement with non-schooling practices, in line with their ethnotheories, around home learning (chores and errands, hawking, farming), elementary Islamic schooling and handiwork, most of which contended with schooling's rigid schedule and after-school homework/study requirements. Parental agency freedom around handiwork was particularly substantive: both mothers and fathers took significant steps to pursue this on behalf of children.

The chapter argued that transnational normative frameworks; national economic and political structures; parents' lack of schooling; and habitus (including ethnotheories) underpinned parents' and parental functionings while the same structures, capital (the lack thereof) and habitus (including ethnotheories) enabled and/or constrained parental agency freedom around schooling. The chapter revealed a fourth dimension of constraints to parental agency freedom (the first three having been identified by teachers in **Chapter 6**): the valuing and pursuit of schooling *and* other functionings (*expanded pursuits*). As the chapter argued, all dimensions of parental agency freedom, whether narrow or expanded, were subject to constraints as neither the structure nor volume of parents' resources increased alongside their choices.

9.2.2. New insights

Parents' resistive strategies

In Bourdieu's social theory, change occurs within a field when agents seek to implement strategies to subvert the symbolic order or the way things are (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). However, the notion of subversion appears to only apply to intra-[sub]field agency. 'Dominated' agents seeking to implement subversive strategies do so within the [sub]field whose order they seek to subvert. Failure to achieve subversion results in symbolic violence which legitimates (*misrecognizes and accepts*) the symbolic order, engendering a reproductive habitus (Mills, 2008) and eroding future possibilities of subversion.

As argued in **7.4**, the parents in this study misrecognized but questioned their domination within the basic schooling subfield. Moreover, their *non-schooling*, *adaptive* and *expanded* agentic pursuits (**Chapter 8**) suggests that rather than seek to implement subversive strategies within the durable schooling subfield against which parents recognized they were likely to fail, parents implemented subversive strategies *outside* the field. Through *isē ɔwɔ*, rural *talika* parents convert their resources in sufficient volume and relevant form towards achieving desired learning capabilities for children. This was facilitated by the structure of the *isē ɔwɔ* field where the volume and structure of resources are flexible, mediated, and negotiated not primarily through economic but through social and cultural capital, the existing modes of recognition within parents' socio-cultural fields.

Parents' extra-schooling subversion represents a transformative habitus (Mills, 2008) which challenges the transnational hegemonic and normative positioning of schooling by redirecting agency towards other forms of learning parents value. Their resistance is, thus, a response to the durable yet dynamic landscape of schooling, controlled by 'dominating' elites who wield power and shape and reshape the rules of the field (e.g., the current reality that secondary or even tertiary schooling no longer guarantees children's economic self-reliance in the immediate to short term). For some parents, it is better to exit schooling entirely than persist to play its 'game', one in which the rules do not, and may never, favour them.

From paternal involvement to paternal engagement

An economic lens (Engle & Breaux, 1998) has provided two key insights into fathers' involvement in schooling in this study: one, through the inadequacy of fathers' livelihood earnings which, particularly in commB, constrained fathers' capability for *provision*; and two, through the nature of fathers' livelihoods which, particularly in commA, limited fathers' capability for *participation* and *governance*. However, this economic lens also intersects with a religious and socio-cultural one where polygyny and fathers' low earnings limit the total volume of household resources, and therefore each wife's share of such resources.

While these findings highlight fathers' limitations around some parental involvement practices, insight around fathers' engagement in other forms of learning highlight fathers' capabilities. Fathers' significant levels of engagement in children's handiwork decision-making; Master trainer search; and provision (e.g., for registration costs) suggest fathers' 'absence' in one learning domain is, in part, compensated for by their 'presence' in another. Research into fathers' involvement and engagement in children's learning lives in rural Africa which excludes non-schooling learning will underrepresent paternal agency and thereby perpetuate an 'absent father' narrative.

Teachers as dual agents

This thesis provides other insights on the complicity of schools in the transmission of cultural capital (3.5). One, it suggests this transmission is contested by the socio-cultural fields within which schools are embedded, where such a field is evident. The schools in this study were located within communities with specific religious and socio-cultural practices and institutions (3.5.1). Thus, to meaningfully engage with communities, school heads needed to not just transmit the dominant schooling culture (i.e., the cultural capital of the dominant middle and upper classes) but acknowledge and respond to the religious and socio-cultural norms of their communities. Teachers were therefore agents of schooling *and* of communities' socio-culture. Though less transformative than the integration of children's socio-culture into curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (Mills, 2008), teachers, as cultural agents, potentiate and lay the foundation for such transformation. Teachers' ability to balance these dual agentic roles possibly also mitigates dissonance between home and schools (3.2).

Two, teachers' balancing act questions an understanding of dominance as high volume of resources plus either economic or cultural structure of resources (3.5.1). For example, both school-communities organize their leaders according to [ability to command] respect (titular and/or age); activeness; community knowledge; and social, cultural as well as economic influence (Famakinwa et al., 2019). As elites in a Bourdieuan sense, they hold power and are recognized as having the most capital. However, the distribution of their recognized capital is often skewed towards the social and cultural (with a low volume of resources), not necessarily economic and political (with a high volume of resources).

9.3. Contributions of the study

9.3.1. Empirical

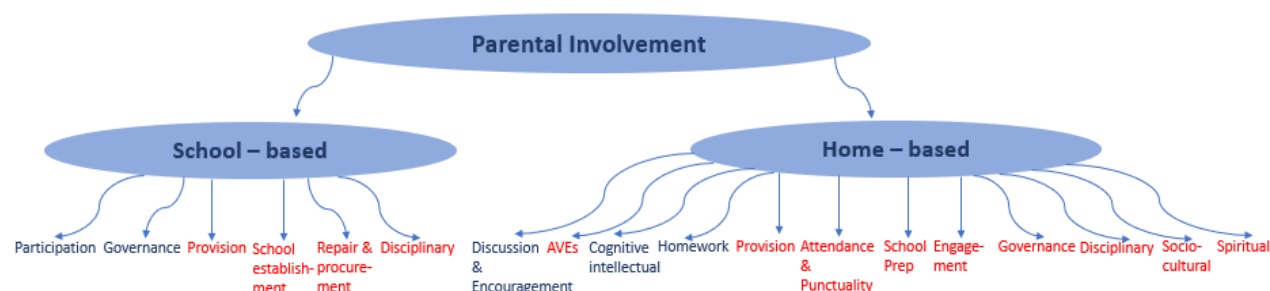
This study examined rural sub-Saharan African parents' perspectives and practices from the point of view of teachers *and* parents, a significant contribution to existing literature which, as reviewed in 3.3, primarily explores these from the perspectives of teachers, students or government officials, among others. By juxtaposing parents' perspectives with teachers, and incorporating children's own voices on their everyday activities, it has enabled an empirical dialogue which has provided rich, deep insight into the environments in which rural children learn.

Another empirical contribution is the study's challenging of the deficit perspectives of rural parents, e.g., their ignorance, uninterest or non-participation in schooling. The analysis revealed rural parents understand and value schooling much more than teachers assumed, holding complex views about its possibilities, especially the structural and capital constraints perceived to limit the realization of children's school learning capabilities. As shown, notable parental agency freedom was uncovered around various involvement practices. Accordingly, rural parental decision-making around, and pursuit of, schooling arises out of the continual consideration of available and accessible schooling options.

A further empirical contribution is the study's deepening of Barger et al. (2019)'s typology (**Figure 3.2**). While the literature review contributed aspirations, values and expectations (AVEs), the analysis added another eight: school-based *school establishment, repair & procurement of school infrastructure, provision* and *Qmqlùàbí-Disciplinary*; and home-based *provision, attendance & punctuality, school preparedness, engagement, governance, Qmqlùàbí-disciplinary, Qmqlùàbí-socio-cultural* and *spiritual*. These categories feature basic, communal, socio-cultural and spiritual practices and are likely transferable to similar rural contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly where European-style schooling is nascent. Though the original Barger et al. (2019) typology makes no attempts to theorize parental involvement, it does highlight the practices deemed important by key scholars of parental involvement. However, this thesis shows that, in

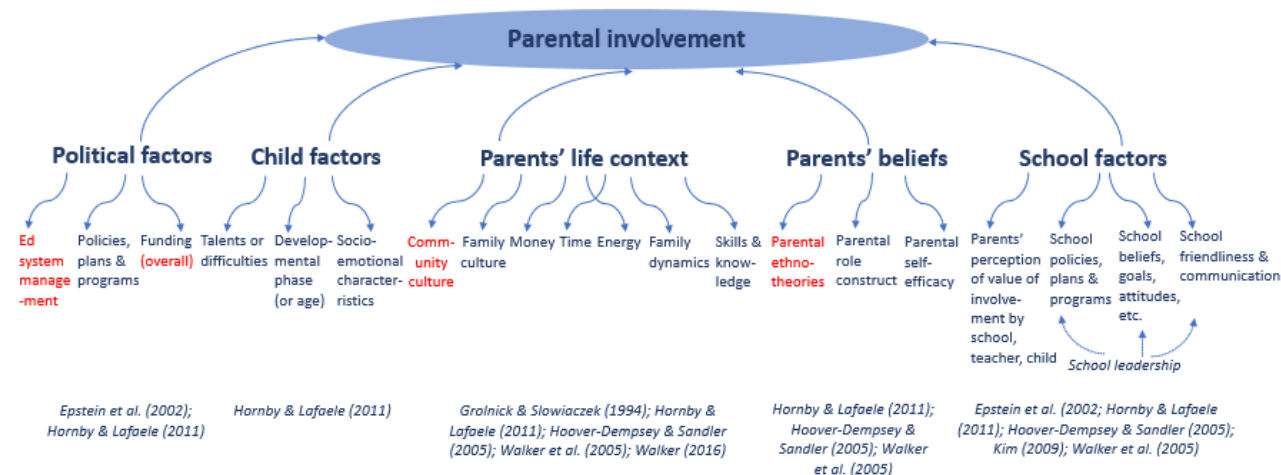
the absence of research conducted in rural sub-Saharan Africa, there are factors missing from this typology. AVEs and the eight additional practices, combined with the original typology, offer a more contextually relevant classification of parental involvement in less industrialized contexts. **Figure 9.1** illustrates (study's additions in red):

Figure 9.1 New typologies of parental involvement in schooling



The study also deepened evidence around the influences on parental involvement. In contexts similar to this study's, additional influences must be considered, including management and implementation of schooling at the local, sub-national and national levels; religious and socio-cultural characteristics and dynamics of school-communities; and parents' or carers' ethnotheories. While funding for parental involvement programs is relevant for more industrialized contexts where such targeted funding exists, in less industrialized contexts where they often do not, overall funding for schooling should also be considered along with whether and how schools utilize it to implement parental involvement programs. **Figure 9.2** illustrates these new study-generated influences in red, in addition to those generated through the study's literature review (**Figure 3.4**).

Figure 9.2 New influences on parental involvement in schooling



Finally, the study has contributed significantly to deepening what is known not only about parental *involvement* in schooling, but also parental *engagement* with the learning which occurs outside schooling. Research around learning in rural sub-Saharan Africa which narrowly conceives learning as schooling and does not transcend parental involvement – thereby excluding an analysis of options, choices, and pursuits *outside* school learning – underrepresents and therefore underrecognizes parental agency around children’s learning. Examining parental engagement also enables deeper understanding of schooling by providing insight into how other forms of learning interact with schooling.

9.3.2. Theoretical

The study’s Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework which combines Bourdieu’s social tools – field, forms of capital and habitus – and capability concepts – parental functionings, agency freedom and agency achievement, makes a novel conceptual contribution. Unlike most parental involvement research in less industrialized contexts which rely on Epstein et al. (2002)’s U.S. centric, school-driven interventionist framework (Kim, 2018), the findings demonstrate that the framework is appropriate for the study context (and likely for similar ones) because it provides meaningful insight into parents’ beliefs, actions, and the structural influences on those beliefs and actions.

A further theoretical contribution is the study’s introduction of new concepts and clarification of existing ones. New concepts were extrapolated from existing ones, including parental cultural capital; parental engagement; parental functionings and parents’ functionings; parental and parents’ capabilities; parental and child [co]agency and parental goals; and communal capabilities and communal agency. The study also analytically clarified parental agency by applying three levels of analysis, namely parental agency freedom ((a) availability of options and (b) pursuit of chosen option) and parental agency achievement ((c) success of pursuit). The inclusion of choice within parental agency freedom facilitated the conceptualization of four agency dimensions: *non-schooling pursuits*, *adaptive pursuits*, *schooling pursuits* and *expanded pursuits*. These provided new insight into parents’ choices and, combined with an analysis of the social space, revealed important insights into the constraints surrounding those choices.

Notably, the inclusion of choice within parental agency freedom conceptually clarifies the position of choice within the capability approach as choice is sometimes included in agency achievement (e.g., Buckler, 2016). Positioning choice in this way reflects Sen’s broadened view of freedom which, as discussed in 3.4, includes the existence of opportunities as well as the freedom to choose which one(s) to pursue. In *The Idea of Justice*, Sen argues for a separation of the opportunity aspect of freedom – which includes the existence of the opportunity – from the process aspect – which includes the choice to pursue the opportunity:

First, more freedom gives us more opportunity to pursue our objectives – those things we value (i.e., what we value exists as an option). ... This aspect of freedom is concerned with our ability to achieve what we value, no matter what the process is through which that achievement comes about. Second, we may attach importance to the process of choice itself. We may, for example, want to make sure that we are not being forced into some state because of constraints imposed by others. (Sen, 2009, p. 228)

Earlier definitions of agency achievement offer further clarity on where choice is *not* positioned:

agency achievement refers to the person's success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives. If a person aims at, say, the independence of her country, or the prosperity of her community, or some such general goal, her agency achievement would involve evaluation of states of affairs in the light of those objects... (Sen, 1995, p. 56)

As the above demonstrates, agency achievement is an evaluation of the *success* of one's agency pursuit, implying that a choice has been previously made (i.e., in agency freedom) about what to pursue. This conceptual and analytical clarification offers greater coherence and consistency in the operationalization of some core concepts of the capability approach. This positioning of choice in this study also contributes to the analytical approach around parental agency freedom which moves beyond a dichotomous yes or no to acknowledge the recurrent and dynamic nature of agency.

Finally, the study contributes to current debates about the ontological implications of combining the capability approach with other conceptual or theoretical lenses. Though the approach has gained wide popularity in recent years, it is still an emerging theoretical framework. While scholars have begun to combine it with other theoretical ideas such as Fraser's theory of social justice (e.g., Tikly & Barrett (2011)); critical realism (e.g., Tao (2013), Martins (2006), Powell & McGrath (2017), etc.); Bourdieu (e.g., Hart (2012), DeJaeghere (2018)); and postcolonial and feminist theories (DeJaeghere (2020)); the ontological dimensions of such combinations have largely only received attention in the capability – critical realist dyad. To my knowledge, this thesis is the first scholarly work to substantively address the ontological implications of a Sen – Bourdieu combination. This, as well as discussion of the ontological implications of the combination of the approach with other ideas (including indigenous epistemologies), remains an emerging area which merits greater attention in capability scholarship.

9.3.3. Methodological

An important methodological contribution of this study is its approach to accessing in depth the *Qmqlùàbí* moral ethical framework and reflexively working with that framework, as it emerged through enquiry, to direct the research praxis itself. The participant-centred approach initially adopted was further extended, by integrating participants' own conceptions of ethics into the study's ethics protocol, thereby moving beyond a reliance on the ethics codes developed in researcher(s)' contexts, which are typically based on universalistic conceptions of ethics (e.g., deontological and consequentialist philosophies). It could be argued that an appreciation of participants' perspectives towards ethics is 'standard' ethnographic practice given the need, in ethnography, to immerse oneself in participants' culture and, therefore, it might be assumed, their ethics and norms. However, while immersion in participants' culture may have held true in older traditional models of ethnography where ethnographers (usually anthropologists), to a large extent, sought to learn the culture of those they studied and, while participant observing, acted based on their understanding of such culture (including norms, ethics, etc.) (Hammersley, 2006; personal communication, September 21, 2021), the current vast range of ethnographic approaches (e.g., visual, virtual, etc. (see Hammersley, 2018) or those based on interviews alone), adopted across diverse disciplines, contests the notion of a 'standard' culturally immersive ethnographic approach. Moreover, culture is broader than ethics and it cannot be assumed that immersion into participants' culture automatically translates into in-depth knowledge about their ethics worldview. Even where this knowledge may be held by the researcher, it is often not made explicit or clear how such knowledge was integrated into the ethics framework that guided the research process or whether this was even envisaged. This study's novel methodological contribution, relative to its *Qmqlùàbí* moral ethical framework, thus lies not only in its deep and reflexive understanding of participants' conceptions of ethics, but also in its demonstration of how this can be practically integrated into the overall methodological framework which guides research activity. This contribution is therefore concerned with how researchers think about the *ethics* of social research from a comparative perspective, rather than only about how they carry out ethnographic studies in a broad sense, and encourages a more situated conception of ethics which embodies the ethics conceptions and practices of the people being studied.

Notably, the *Qmqlùàbí* moral ethical framework has been published in a leading, peer reviewed ethics journal (Oyinloye, 2021) and has begun to influence other educational researchers to take steps towards more participant-centred integrative ethics processes within their institutions. Relatedly, the study's 'linguistic reflexivity' which integrates participants' language and limits the extent to which participants' speech is 'cleaned' or anglicized in its re-presentation, contributes to the integration of participants' cultural values.

Another significant methodological contribution is the in-depth demonstration of the methodological messiness, contentions and complexities of doing fieldwork outside one's primary context, particularly with economically disadvantaged populations. This demonstration cautions the uncritical application of methods across contexts without "revision, modification or analysis of their relevance" (Cortina et al., 2019, p. 490). A more critical application may, however, require integrating participants' epistemologies and the *Qmólúàbí* moral ethical framework illustrates how this may be done.

Finally, another methodological contribution is the generation of parental functionings using multiple methods – interviews (partly structured and photo elicited), observations, group meetings and casual conversations – and the insight into parental agency and structures these offered alongside parents' reports of their own agentic actions. Though interviews are an essential part of understanding agents' choices and pursuits, particularly where these are adapted (Khader, 2011), observations and group interactions deepened these insights and ensured their validity through triangulation.

9.4. Limitations

This study has made important contributions; however, some limitations are recognized.

First, selection bias. Biases are factors or influences that distort or undermine a study's credibility (Polit & Beck, 2010). Selection biases occur at different levels, including the identification of study population, participants, and whose views to represent in the thesis. The most notable in this study is related to participants: the purposive selection of parents through school heads. Though selected parents were appropriate and knowledgeable on the study topic, and the data generated varied aspects of the same (Morse et al., 2002), it was not possible to completely remove selection bias through random sampling (Shenton, 2004). Random sampling would not only have been costly and time consuming, it would have implied a realist ontological desire to get close to 'truth,' thereby contesting the study's relativist ontology. Notably, selection bias was mitigated by the voices of non-selected parents elicited from teachers' and selected parents' accounts (through parents' views of other parents) and the more than 100 additional contributors to interactions. Nevertheless, the study may have been further enriched with more voices of commA's 'transporter' fathers. Future studies could seek to participate in the spaces in which these fathers gather (i.e., community meetings) or explore the possibility of 'go-along' interactions with them.

Second, generalizability. Qualitative (including primarily qualitative ethnographic) research does not seek to generalize but to transfer its findings across contexts by equipping readers with as much contextual information as possible to enable them to do so themselves (5.6). Future work and researchers may consider the extent to which this study's findings may be transferred to other similar contexts.

Third, fieldwork duration and scheduling. Given the decision to live in the main town (5.4) – due to relational, logistical and psychological wellbeing considerations – not all home-based practices were observed, particularly those occurring in the late evenings (i.e., after 5 p.m.), in the early mornings (i.e., before 8 a.m.) and on weekends. Hammersley (2006) attributes the difference between early anthropological ethnographies – living with communities for at least a year or more – and contemporary ones – lasting months – to increasing pressures of productivity within short periods in academia. Similar pressures of time and resources were experienced within this study, necessitating a ‘shorter’ fieldwork. However, as has been noted, this study did not aim to be a ‘pure’ ethnography but rather drew from ethnography. Information on practices which occurred outside the fieldwork schedule was drawn from participants’ reports and triangulated with other methods and data sources. The follow-up visit also enabled observation of changes over time, similar in some ways to a ‘longer’ fieldwork.

Fourth, positionality. It is possible that participants, associating me with power and privilege, told me what they thought I wanted to hear. But, as discussed in 4.4, this primarily led to solicitations for aid with infrastructure and other school amenities. Moreover, the transparent and highly personal narratives of participants suggest this limitation did not significantly affect the study’s credibility. Participants’ perspectives and practices may have also been influenced by their association of me as part of schools. While this may have occurred at the very beginning of fieldwork, similarly, participants’ increasingly candid revelations suggested that this perception gradually eroded over fieldwork.

9.5. Universal primary education and the international education architecture

Although this study did not specifically focus on children’s school learning or educational achievement, parents’ concerns around children’s school learning and their persistent enrolment of children in *isẹ ọwọ* reiterate the challenges around learning within Nigeria’s public universal basic education system, as discussed in **Chapter 2**. However, the learning challenges of universal primary or basic education systems are not unique to Nigeria. They are shared, in varying degrees, among low-income countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2021)’s analysis of learning profiles includes data from five other African countries and four South Asian. Nigeria’s 19.5 percent literacy rate for primary school completers (who able to read three sentences with little or no help) is the lowest among the ten countries. That of Uganda is 27; that of Ghana, 51; and that of Kenya, 68. The other two African countries, Rwanda and Tanzania, are higher with 80 and 81 percent respectively, while those of the South Asian countries range between 34 and 80 percent. Kaffenberger and Pritchett’s analysis led to their conclusion that “schooling is not reliably producing even modest levels of learning” in many low-income countries around the world (p. 2). Other analyses echo this view, particularly for sub-Saharan Africa.

Regional assessments from West and Central Africa suggest almost 58 percent of primary 6 children do not possess the requisite reading or mathematics skills to progress to the next level of schooling, with the figure higher for children from poor families and/or rural areas (World Bank, 2018). Other models project that as much as half of Africa's primary school population – an estimated 61 million children – reach adolescence without the basic, functional numeracy and literacy skills necessary for productivity in adulthood (van Fleet, 2012) or for further schooling (World Bank, 2018).

This bleak picture has caused various scholars (e.g., Burnett (2019), Kaffenberger and Pritchett (2021), etc.) and practitioners, alongside the World Bank (2018) and the Education Commission (2016), to re-sound the alarm of a deepening 'learning crisis', particularly in low-income countries, many of which are in Africa. The Education Commission suggests the crisis can be addressed by strengthening education systems' performance measurement capacities; prioritizing education workforce and technological innovations while increasing partnerships with non-state actors (e.g., civil society, business, employers); prioritizing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged; and increasing and improving education financing, particularly domestically. Lewin (2020) echoes the need to improve domestic financing as well as the efficiency (of translating resources to services) and effectiveness (of translating services into learning) of national education systems, all underpinned by political will. The World Bank, on its part, attributes the crisis to lack of learner preparation (due poverty and material deprivation; language and cognitive gaps; and weak socioemotional and executive functions), low teacher skills and motivation, low school management skills, and lagging inputs (i.e., behind rising enrolment) (World Bank, 2018). For the World Bank, and similar to Lewin, these factors are underpinned by system weaknesses – incoherent national education systems misaligned with the goal of learning – ultimately underpinned by technical weaknesses and political factors.

Like the World Bank, Burnett (2019) places the responsibility of addressing the crisis primarily on national governments. However, he bemoans the failure of the international architecture (agencies, institutions, etc. which receive and manage resources to support countries' education systems) to provide necessary financial and technical support, particularly to sub-Saharan African countries, to help countries develop their education systems. He is particularly critical of SDG4, which for him lacks prioritization and is irrelevant to the educational development needs of many African countries who he believes will struggle to achieve the completion of secondary schooling for all children (and should therefore prioritize basic learning). Beeharry (2021) is similarly concerned, advocating for fewer objectives and the prioritization of foundational (i.e., functional, see also Education Commission (2016)) literacy and numeracy in sub-Saharan Africa and other low-income countries, a measurable metric he believes critical for progress and achievement of SDG4. Mundy (2021) is just as concerned but cautions what she believes is Beeharry's heavy focus on a measurement paradigm for functional literacy and numeracy; and Beeharry and Burnett's exclusion of other philanthropic organizations (Beeharry was an advisor to the Gates Foundation) and civil

society coalitions, including those representing teachers themselves. She underscores the need to recentre national ownership of education objectives; strengthen national capacity (i.e., Burnett (2019)'s technical assistance); and build civil society coalitions, particularly those representing educators.

This thesis contributes to this debate in a number of ways. First, it includes the voices of parents, particularly those of the poor and disadvantaged whose children are disproportionately represented among the cohort of children who are not acquiring the necessary functional skills necessary for further schooling or work. Awareness of and debates about the learning crisis in low-income contexts exists not just in the international scholarly/practitioner realm. As this thesis demonstrates, poor rural and disadvantaged parents (and, of course, their children's teachers) are highly aware that their children, particularly in comparison with children from higher income families even within their own national contexts, are not learning. They are also highly aware and critical of the deeper systemic (i.e., political) factors underpinning this condition. They are vociferous about these factors and, as has already been discussed, though few reject state schooling, many persist but, as a form of resistance, hedge it with other forms of learning (e.g., Islamic schooling and vocational training). When enabled, their resistance is also exercised through democratic action, challenging Beeharry (2021)'s assertion that there is no electoral demand for primary school quality in low-income countries. The overwhelming defeat of the incumbent in Kwara's state elections for reasons including poor schooling management (at the state and sub-state levels), quality and outcomes even in rural, poor parts of the state could be seen as a democratic critique of the systemic factors underpinning, among other things, weak public school learning. Parents are a critical constituent and voice in the school learning conversation and the apparent exclusion of their perspectives, particularly on the processes and outcomes they desire for *their* children, is a glaring omission in the 'international' discourse. As such, efforts to address the 'learning crisis' which fail to consider how parents, even those poor, rural or disadvantaged, may be considered as meaningful partners and agents in the process are not likely to be efficacious.

Second, and related to the first, parents (even poor, rural and disadvantaged ones) in this study understand the importance of functional (or foundational) literacy and numeracy skills. However, they recognize its importance not just for further schooling, (formal) work or on-the-job training (World Bank, 2018, 2019), but also for the acquisition and practice of vocational skills towards self-employment in the informal sector, a response to persistent formal unemployment within their contexts. Though the ILO (2020) suggests that nearly one third of tertiary educated youth in Africa and two thirds of secondary educated youth (15-24) are engaged in the informal sector (95.8 percent in sub-Saharan versus 87.5 in Northern Africa), international organizations and coalitions, fuelled by human capital – formal sector productivity – economic growth concerns, remain overwhelmingly concerned by the learning crisis for a dynamic 'future' world of formal work with its requirements of high-level technical, cognitive and specialized skills

(Education Commission, 2016; World Bank, 2018, 2019). In contrast, poor, rural disadvantaged parents – and, even, somewhat less poor, urban dwelling ones – are overwhelmingly concerned about the crisis for their ‘present’ world of limited formal and (seemingly) limitless informal work, leading to the pervasiveness of informal vocational training (informal apprenticeships), increasingly practiced concurrently, rather than as a continuum (i.e., completion of formal schooling prior to enrolment in informal apprenticeships, see Mellet & Carton (2019)).

Despite evidence about the importance of *informal* vocational training to many poor, rural and disadvantaged youth’s capabilities (this thesis; ILO (2020); Alla-Mensah & McGrath, 2021, etc.), it remains virtually non-existent in the international education architecture. Where it appears, it is usually subordinated to formal vocational training (which is increasingly recognized) and, even more so, school learning. For instance, among the SDGs’ 169 targets (ten related to ‘education’ and twelve related to ‘employment and decent work’) and 237 unique indicators, there is no target or indicator for informal (or even formal) vocational training. References to vocational training (e.g., 4.3: vocational education; 4.4: vocational skills; 4.5: vocational training; 4.b: vocational training; and 4.3.1: non-formal education and training) position it as a form of (and thus, a subset) of higher education and do not typically distinguish between formal or informal. Veiled references to informal vocational training are found in target 8.3, which seeks to formalize micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and its indicator, 8.3.1, *proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex* and other targets that speak to the general acquisition of knowledge and skills or youth employment (e.g., 4.7, 4.a, 8.6). Notably, though indicator 4.3.1 seeks to measure youth/adults’ participation in formal and non-formal education, it is conceptually and, therefore, practically unclear whether *non-formal education and training* is analogous to *informal vocational training* (not to mention that participation does not necessarily equal skills acquisition, i.e., quality). For McGrath et al. (2018), the lack of clarity of indicator 4.3.1 (alongside other targets) relative to degree of formality may result in the prioritization of the more ‘easily’ measurable formal vocational training.

While these critiques do not downplay the real challenges of measuring type and degree of participation and quality in formal / informal vocational training, they do suggest that more explicit attention is required for informal vocational education and training in the international education architecture. Undoubtedly, human capital concerns about the future ‘world of work’ (i.e., productivity of the next generation of workers (World Bank, 2019)) are important, and many poor, rural or disadvantaged parents’ continued interest and persistence in enrolling children in basic, secondary and tertiary schooling in this study, where economically possible, highlights the future-orientedness of such parents’ aspirations for their children. However, these parents’ persistent, parallel enrolments of children in informal vocational training suggests that international ‘educational’ priorities which continue to eschew the current realities of ‘work’ in low-

income countries (and parents' attempts to respond to it) are unlikely to meet the needs of the vast majority of parents – both poor and less poor; rural and urban – and youth in these settings. Rather than a refutation of school learning, parents' dual practices are a manifestation of their desire for a learning ecosystem that not only prepares children for a future world of work, but also equips them to meet the exigencies of the present one.

Finally, and related to the previous point, the assumptions and values about education – school-based education for future work and economic growth – inherent in the international education architecture perpetuate a narrow, school-based view of 'education' which ignores parents' desires for an expanded system of learning which meets the present, future, socio-cultural and environmental needs of diverse socio-spatial contexts. Like many actors in the international education architecture, parents are interested in school-based education for its instrumental, human capital promises of formal employment and consistent salaried income. However, parents, particularly the rural ones in this study, are also interested in education (school-based or out of school) in a wider sense: for the array of other capabilities it potentiates, including religious and traditional ones, the latter for its socio-cultural skills towards communal harmony (e.g., *Ọmọlúàbí*). Such broader 'educational' objectives challenge the normative doctrine of 'education' in the international education architecture while raising the epistemic question of whose assumptions, values and knowledge are indeed valued. Notably, while the SDGs highlight indigenous peoples' educational needs (target 4.5), these needs are framed within the normative *schooling (and formal vocational training) as education* paradigm, rather than through an acknowledgement of indigenous (and indeed, every individual or community's) right to self-determine their education. This thesis suggests that there is greater scope for the international education architecture, in particular the policy of universal primary education, to become more epistemically just. That is, to recognize diverse 'educational' choices, practices and systems, underpinned by different assumptions and values about what knowledge is important, for whom, when and how, including the choice to *not be* school educated (where indeed it is a choice rather than a forced trade-off adaptive preference) or to combine school and other forms of education.

9.6. Future research directions

The rich insight generated in this study raises other questions that may be explored by other researchers. One, this study has revealed dimensions of parental value formation and freedom primarily at the inter-household and communal level but has also alluded to some intra-household differences in preferences, decision-making, and resource allocation around schooling. Future research could further explore these differences, as well as relationships, in relation to parent gender, wife position, child age/birth order/[dis]ability, etc.

Two, the current study has suggested that school heads are differentially motivated and do not always feel officially supported to exercise their agency around school leadership and management. Given the criticality of school heads to school-parent interactions and relationships, future research could further explore school heads' motivations, values, and the extent to which they feel empowered to exercise their agency to realize these values.

Three, future research could further explore *expanded* pursuits (8.4) from young people's perspectives e.g., available and accessible pathways, preferences and choices, and agency in the pursuit of choices, including parental/carer engagement in preference formation and agency freedom. Such research could be embedded within or anchored at key transition points (i.e., between primary and JSS; JSS3 and SS1; and SS3 and post-secondary), which this study suggests are key loci of agency value/goal formation and freedom.

Four, future research could explore young people's experiences in different types of handiwork; their relationships with their trainers; the content or 'curriculum' of the chosen handiwork; and the environments in which they learn. Though this study has used 'handiwork' as an umbrella term, different forms exist, e.g., tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, mechanic, bricklayer, etc., which are likely to influence the individual and/or collective experiences young people have.

Five, and in direct response to one of the policy suggestions, future research could explore the breadth and scope of the apprenticeship sector at the state/LGA level, particularly its existing and emergent types, as well as its mechanisms, and systems of checks and balances.

9.7. Concluding remarks

In the introduction to this study, I wondered why development partners persist in *first* implementing interventions, and *then* asking questions, even as interventions continue to fail to produce intended outcomes. There is some evidence of change. Donors like FCDO are now seeking to 'do development differently', explicitly encouraging implementing partners to adapt – test, learn and apply learnings – and engage constituents (i.e., beneficiaries) in intervention design, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation (Laws et al., 2021, p. 3). However, constituent engagement in design remains centred around program activities (Buell et al., 2020), rather than overarching program design which, much of the time, have already been agreed between donors and implementers. As such, there remains considerable scope for constituent engagement not only in the interrogation of the 'problems' donors have taken it upon themselves to solve, but also in the overall design of the programs donors intend to use to solve these problems.

For education development partners seeking to operate in rural Muslim communities in Nigeria (and in similar contexts), the issues identified by this study's 'constituents' may be integrated with insight from contextually appropriate and culturally situated pre-intervention constituent engagement towards the design of future interventions. While adaptive programming and implementation constituent engagement are a positive participatory shift, truly doing development differently begins when questions are asked first of constituents and when constituents themselves identify the problems they wish to solve.

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Appendix A. Selected participants

PARENTS

HH#	ID* (ParentHH#Comm)	Occupation	Schooling	Schooling (Formal Islamic)	Role SchoolA (SA)/B (SB) (2018/2019)	#[grand] Children in SA/SB	Primary/JSS Children's Levels	#Wives HH	Wife Position	Spouse Occupation
1	Mother1commA	Micro trader (jewelleries, palm oil, vegetables); schoolA food vendor	JSS3	Elementary Islamic schooling (EIS)	PTA (every parent with a child in school is a member)	1	5, JSS1	3	Second	Transporter (Ise moto)
2	Mother2commA	Makes / sells cassava fufú	None	None (knows enough to pray)	PTA	N/A	JSS2	2	First	Transporter
3	Mother3commA	Farmer; operates grinding machine; sells local cereal pudding & vegetables	None	None	PTA	3	1,2,6, JSS2	2	First	Transporter
4	Grandmother4commA	Sells cooked food (rice, spaghetti, etc)	None	None	PTA	2	KG1, KG2	3	First	Medical Doctor (LGA hospital)
5	Father5commA	Head Teacher	Grade2 NCE	None	PTA	2	KG1,3, JSS1, JSS2	1	N/A	Hairdresser
6	Father6commA	Retired Transporter, farmer	None	EIS	PTA	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	Various (one teaches at)
7	Mother7commA	Sells fried tofu cakes, farmer	None	None	PTA	1	6	2	First	Transporter
8	Father8commA	Teacher & proprietor; farmer	Grade2 (NCE Islamic Studies)	NCE Islamic Studies	None; Chairman, J/SSS Ed Committee; PTA Chairman, J/SSS	N/A	1,3,5	2	N/A	Various
9	Mother9commA	Farmer; sells vegetables, cassava, etc	Primary6	None	PTA	2	KG, 2	2	First	Vehicle alignment
10	Father10commA	Ààfáà (Islamic priest); Arabic teacher	None;	Secondary Islamic schooling	PTA Chairman; Treasurer, J/SSS Ed Committee	3	KG,1,2	2	N/A	Various
1	Grandmother1commB	Farmer	None	None	Exec Member, SBMC (women's representative)	2	Did not know	2	First	Trader Northern Ng
2	Father2commB	Farmer, gas welder (former life)	None	EIS	Exec Member, SBMC (position TBD -likely Chair)	3	1,4,5	2	N/A (First wife in town)	Farmer

3	Father3commB	Farmer, vulcanizer, trader of goods	None	None	PTA Chairman	4	KG,1,2,4	2 ¹	N/A (Both wives in the village)	Farmer, sells pure water, bread, smoked fish
4	Father4commB	Farmer, tailor (not practicing)	None	None	Exec Member, J/SSS SBMC (position TBD)	4	1,1,3,6	2	2nd (First wife in town)	Farmer
5	Grandfather4commB	Farmer	None	None	None	4	1,1,3,6	1	N/A	Farmer
6	Father5commB	Farmer	Primary6	None	PTA (former member SBMC)	4	1,2,3,6	1	N/A	Farmer, sells vegetables in town
7	Father6commB	Farmer	None	None	Chairman, J/SSS SBMC (former PTA Chairman, schoolB)	4	KG1, KG2,3,4	2	N/A (Both wives in the village)	Farmer
8	Mother7commB	Farmer, sells provisions (pasta, milk, soap, etc)	None	None	PTA	5	KG,1,1,5,6	2	First	Local transport Union deputy
9	Father7commB	Local transporters union deputy boss; farmer, traditional medicine	None	None	PTA	>5	>KG,1,1,5,6	2	N/A	Farmer, sells provisions (pasta, milk, soap, etc)
10	Grandmother8commB	Farmer	None	None (enough to pray)	PTA	3	2,4,6	1	Only	Farmer
11	Grandfather8commB	Farmer	Yorùbá Adult school (read, write)	None (enough to pray)	PTA	3	2,4,6	1	N/A	Farmer
12	Mother8commB ²	Farmer	None	None	PTA	2	4,6	>1	First	Farmer

**IDs are adopted for anonymity, as discussed and agreed with participants. Psuedonyms (i.e., giving people a name different than that bestowed by their families) are considered inappropriate in the cultural context. A similar structure is adopted for children.*

1-two living wives. A third wife (the first wife) passed away years ago, so he married another

2-daughter of Grandmother8 who doesn't live in commB and thus was not initially selected. Two of her children live with her parents in commB to help and serve as company.

CHILDREN

HH#	Comm	ID (GenderHH)	Selected Parent	Date of Birth	Age Stage2	Level Stage2 (2018/2019)	Level Stage3 (2019/2020)	Schooling status Stage3 (In/out of school) (Nov 2019)	Handiwork status Stage3	Elementary Islamic status Stage3
1	A	Boychild1	Mother1	April 01, 2009	9	P5	P6	In	Not started	Pre-primary (EIS)
2	A	Boychild2	Mother2	May 15, 2006	12	JSS1	JSS2	In	Not started	EIS
3	A	Girlchild3	Mother3	September 05, 2008	10	P6	JSS1	In	Not started	EIS
4	A	Girlchild3 stepsister*	Mother3's co- wife	December 13, 2006	12	P6	JSS1	In	Not started	EIS
5	A	Girlchild5	Father5	April 29, 2008	10	JSS1	JSS2	In	Not started	EIS
6	A	Girlchild7	Mother7	January 05, 2006	13	P6	JSS1	In	Not started	EIS
7	A	Girlchild9	Mother9	-	-	JSS1	JSS2	Dropped out	Just started (tailor)	EIS
1	B	Boychild2	Father2	February 4, 2004	15	P6	JSS1	In	Started (~2 mths - (mechanic)	EIS
2	B	Girlchild3	Father3	July 06, 2010	8	P4	P5	In	Will start in few mths (chemist)	EIS
3	B	Boychild4	Father4	October 20, 2007	11	P6	JSS1	In	Soon to start (tailor)	EIS
4	B	Boychild5	Father5	October 15, 2005	13	P6	JSS1	Out	Soon to start (mechanic)	EIS (completed but not graduated)
5	B	Girlchild6	Father6	December 18, 2005	13	P4	P5	In	Not started (will start after P6)	EIS
6	B	Boychild7	Mother7	Unobtainable^	11	P5	P6	In	Started (~3 mths - tailor)	EIS (completed)
7	B	Girlchild7	Mother7	Unobtainable	11~	P6	JSS1	Out	Started in stage 2 (~9 mths - tailor)	EIS (completed)
8	B	Girlchild8	Grandmother8	Unobtainable	14	P6	JSS1	In (enrolled November)	Will start (~Jan 2020 - hairdresser)	EIS

*Daughter of Mother3's junior wife and friends with Girlchild3 and Girlchild7. Contributed to the discussion during stage3

^Exact dates could not be obtained during fieldwork. Children were asked to bring in birth certificates or write birth dates in notebooks and bring to school. Some forgot; others' certificates were kept in town. Ages here are those in Schools' registers for 2018/2019 (October to July). School did not write birth dates and it unclear when ages were written so they are likely to be underestimates by at least a year. This was the case for Boychild5 whose age had been written as 12 but whose neighbour later confirmed was 13. She remembered because the boy was a month and a half older than her son.

~Boychild7 and Girlchild7 are siblings, with Girlchild7 a level ahead though perhaps not up to a year older. Her 2018/2019 age was written as 11 while her brother's 2019/2020 age was written as 12.

Appendix B. Actual participants (recorded audio interactions)

Stages 2 and 3: Parents and children's individual / communal interactions

#	Comm	Intended Participant	# Recorded Interactions	Average length of recording (mins)	Length of recording (mins)	Others contributing to interactions (Communal interviewees)
1	A	Mother1	5	13	65.21	Interaction #1: Mother2, woman awaiting <i>fufu</i> , Grandmother's (junior) co-wife #2: Father6, two women (including one of Father6's wives), Mother3, Mother2, Mother1 co-wife #3: Various women (at least four others), Mother9, Father6wife #4: Mother3, Mother2, Mother3 co-wife #5 (stage 3): None
2	A	Mother2	7	11.22	78.55	#1: SchoolA SS learners sent home (including Mother1's son), Mother1, Grandmother4, passers-by (2) #2: 2 neighbours (male, female) #3: Daughter, female extended family member #4: Daughter, two female extended family members #5/#6: None #7 (stage 3): Mother3, Mother3's co-wife, female extended family member
3	A	Boychild2	2	8.35	17.09	#1: Mother3's two youngest daughters and a few other neighbour's children #2 (stage 3): None
4	A	Mother3	6	8.21	47.28	#1: Mother2 #2: None #3: Three children (Girlchild3, 3rd eldest child, male child) #4: All children except eldest daughter (2 nd eldest child (girl), 3 rd eldest child (girl), male child, Girlchild3, two younger girl siblings) #5: Youngest girl child, Mother2, Father6wife #6 (Stage 3): Mother2
5	A	Girlchild3	1	17.3	17.3	Two younger sisters, mother (Mother3)
6	A	Grandmother4	5	18	90.32	#1: Two junior co-wives, various other women (up to 10) #2: Three young men (food customers) #3: None #4: Young girl #5: Mother9
7	A	Father5	7	40.04	317.17	#1/#2/#3: None #4: Wife (Mother5) #5: Three daughters (including girlchild5) #6: Mother5, three daughters #7 (stage 3): Mother5
8	A	Girlchild5	1	12.52	12.52	Father5, mother5, younger sisters

9	A	Father6	4	17.3	68.02	#1: Extended family member #2/#4: None #3: Father8, Mother7's brother in law
10	A	Mother7	6	12.34	72.6	#1: Co-wife, twin daughters, brother in law, stepdaughters (2) #2: Daughters (Girlchild7, one twin), two other women #3: Daughters (Girlchild7, one twin), stepdaughter, twin's friend, brother in law, boy #4: Daughters (Girlchild7, one twin) #5: Brother in law #6 (stage 3): co-wife
11	A	Girlchild7	1	12.01	12.01	#1: Girlchild3 and at least two friends, some boys wander about eavesdropping
12	A	Father8	5	60.38	300.34	None: all interactions took place inside Father8's living room. #5 occurred during stage 3
13	A	Mother9	1	34.54	34.54	Three children (two girls, one toddler)
14	A	Father10	2	22.19	44.28	#1: Male friend, female neighbour #2 (stage 3): None
1	B	Grandmother1	2	13.31	27.03	#1/#2: Junior co-wife
2	B	Father2	4	32.19	127.19	#1: Wife (Mother2), various members of extended and neighbouring families (one male and at least two other females) #2: Mother2, three mothers (extended/neighbouring families), son and two other boys #3: none #4 (stage 3): Neighbour/friend
3	B	Boychild2	2	18.39	36.39	#1: Mother2, brother, sister #2 (stage 3): none
4	B	Father3	3	17.28	52.23	#1/#3: None #2: Father4, Young man
5	B	Girlchild3	2	24.22	48.05	#1: None #2 (stage 3): None
6	B	Father4	4	19.25	75.43	#1: Brother #2/#3/#4: None (#4 occurred during stage 3)
7	B	Grandfather4	2	20.42	41.25	#1: Wife (Grandmother4) #2: Grandson (Boychild4), granddaughter, Father4
8	B	Boychild4	1	15.2	15.2	Father4, younger sister
9	B	Father5	5	26.09	130.47	#1: SchoolB's HT, friend #2: Female neighbour #3: None #4: Female neighbour (different from #2) #5 (stage 3): Boychild5 and friend
10	B	Boychild5	2	20.03	39.27	#1/#2: Elder sister

11	B	Father6	5	18.02	88.13	#1: Two old friends from the village #2: Niece #3: Old friend #4: Second wife (Mother6) #5 (stage 3): Old friend
12	B	Girlchild6	1	29.4	29.4	Two friends, (much) elder brother, various other children
13	B	Mother7	2	19.25	38.1	#1: Three children (two females, one male), daughter in law #2: Girlchild7, extended family members (woman, young girl)
14	B	Father7	2	47.32	94.25	#1: None #2 (Stage 3): None
15	B	Boychild7	1	20.41	20.41	Girlchild7, two younger siblings
16	B	Girlchild7	1	17.11	17.11	(Stage 3) Stepsister
17	B	Mother8	1	35.34	35.34	Sister, sister-in-law (passed away a month before stage 3)
18	B	Grandfather8	3	28.22	83.38	#1/#3: Wife (Grandmother8) (#3 occurred during stage 3) #2: None
19	B	Girlchild8	1	6.49	6.49	Girlchild6 cousin
Total			97		2182.35 (36.4hrs)	CommA: more than 120 CommB: more than 77**

****Includes the 34 intended participants in both communities. Not unique contributors i.e., same contributors recur across multiple interactions (109 additional unique contributors)**

Stages 2 and 3: Pair / Group interactions (parents and children)

#	Comm/ School	# Participants	IDs (where relevant)	Length of recording (mins)	Interaction description
1	A	3	Girlchild3, Girlchild7, Girlchild3's stepsister (3F)	16.29	Children's group chat
2	A	4	Mother7's twin daughters and two stepdaughters (4F)	7.32	Teenagers' group chat
3	B	3	Two women (including Mother4), one man (2F/1M)	25.24	P6 parents' meeting (aborted due to low attendance)
4	B	7	Three women (Mother5's older daughter representing Mother5), four men (including Grandfather8, Grandfather4, Father2) (3F/4M)	50.51	(rescheduled) Primary 6 parents' meeting
5	B	14	Five women (including Mother6, Mother3), Nine men (including Father2, Father3, Father4, Father6)	78.08	General parents' meeting
6	B	8	Two women (schoolB HT and Assistant HT), Six men (two LGEA school supervisors, three male villagers – Father2, Father4, Father6 – and male teacher taking notes) (2F/6M)	47.22	(Stage 3) Spontaneous meeting to discuss the school-community partnership regarding water source installed
				224.66 (3.74hrs)	CommA: 7 CommB: 32

Teachers' individual interactions* (stage 2)

#	School	Sex	Class taught	Qualification	Year started at school	# Recorded Interactions	Length of recording (mins)	Note
1	A	M	Custodian (school caretaker)	n/a		1	14.17	Discussion included one male teacher from the J/SSS
2	A	M	HT (Stage1)	Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)	~2017	1	9.08	Retired beginning of stage 2
3	A	F	HT (Stage3)	NCE	2019 (October)	1	~30	Informal interview during stage 3 – unrecorded but noted
4	A	F	KG	NCE (2009)	2019 (January)	1	8.23	Interaction occurred during stage 3 (teacher arrived schoolA mid stage 2); remained KG teacher in stages 2 and 3
5	A	F	P2	NCE (after 2001)	2001	1	25.46	Transferred by stage 3
6	A	F	P3 (covering for P4)	NCE (2004)	2013	1	22.41	Transferred by stage 3
7	A	F	P4	NCE (2004) + Degree (Sandwich) (2014)	2011	1	12.28	Returned from maternity leave end of stage 2; by stage 3, reassigned to a different class
8	A	M	P5	NCE (2008) + Degree (B.Ed) (2018)	2011 (4 years in university)	1	46.28	Transferred partway during stage 2 to a senior secondary school
9	A	F	P6	NCE (2006)	2017 (January)	1	22.39	Hired by federal government as part of an employment scheme; reassigned to P5 by stage 3 (teachers, except KG and Arabic teachers, are usually reassigned each academic year)
10	A	M	Arabic	NCE	~2006	1	9.51	Teach Arabic to each class/level. Always male and commonly called 'Malim'.
11	A	M	Principal (J/SSS)	NCE	2017 (March)	1	34.14	Three other teachers called in to contribute to various questions
1	B	F	HT	NCE (2007)	2017	3	74.5 (avg. 25.23)	Interaction #3 occurred during stage 3
2	B	F	P3	NCE	2018	1	23.26	Reassigned to teach P4 by stage 3
3	B	F	P4	NCE (2004) + Degree (Sandwich) (2014)	2011	1	8.16	Promoted to Assistant HT towards end of stage 2
4	B	F	P6	NCE (~2006) + Degree (Sandwich) (2014)	2008 (January)	1	33.47	Interaction transformed into a communal interview and included Arabic teacher and newly arrived P5 teacher at the time (Stage 2). By stage 3, P6 Teacher had been reassigned to teach P1 and the new P5 teacher had been reassigned to P2.
5	B	M	Arabic	NCE (2008)	2009 (February)	1	(with P6)	See above comment
Total						18	373.34 (622hrs)	

*Given focus during stage 2 was on HTs, and the teachers of an upper level child of a selected parent, most but not all Ts were individually interviewed: at schoolA, seven teachers including HT (all except the KG); at schoolB, 5 teachers and HT (all teachers except KG, P1 and P2). At stage 3, all teachers in schoolB on the day of interaction participated; at schoolA, it was teachers who had been in the school since stage 2 and who were available. As the notes demonstrate, four other teachers contributed to these interactions (one with schoolA custodian, three with schoolA J/SSS Principal).

Teachers' group interactions (stage 3)

School	#	Class taught (stage 3)	Class taught (stage 2)	Sex	# Recorded Interactions	Length of recording (mins)	Note
A	1	KG	KG	F	1	~20	Interaction occurred in the P5/P6 shared classroom; thus, the new P6 teacher contributed.
	2	P3	P4	F			
	3	P5	P5	F			
	4	P6 (newly arrived)	N/A	F			
B	1	P1	P6	F	1	41.01	Like schoolA, interaction occurred in the P5/P6 shared classroom and the new P6 teacher contributed.
	2	P6 (newly arrived)	N/A	F			
	3	P2	P5	F			
	4	P3*	P2	M			
	5	P4	P3	F			
Total					2	61.01mins (1hr, min)	

**Not interviewed during stage 2 because he was not teaching a child of a selected parent.*

Appendix C. Further details about teachers

#	School	Sex	Class taught stage 2	# Yrs in school (end stage 2)	Residence	Religion	HH Type (M/P)*
1	A	M	Custodian	Unknown (>10)	commA (local)**	Muslim	P
2	A	M	HT (stage 1)	2	Ilorin	Muslim	P
3	A	F	HT (stage 3)	N/A	Ilorin	Muslim	P
4	A	F	KG	2 months	commA (local)	Muslim	P
5	A	F	P2	18	across commA (local)	Muslim	P
6	A	F	P3 (P4 Mat Cover)	6	between commA and Ilorin	Muslim	P
7	A	F	P4	8	commA (local)	Muslim	P
8	A	M	P5	8 (4 in uni)	Ilorin	Muslim	M
9	A	F	P6	2.5	Ilorin	Christian	M
10	A	M	Arabic	8	Nearby commA (local)	Muslim	Unknown (likely P)
11	A	M	Principal (schoolA J/SSS)	2.25 (previously schoolB J/SSS)	Ilorin	Muslim	P
1	B	F	HT	2	Town near commB (partly local)**	Muslim	P
2	B	M	P2	6	Ilorin	Muslim	M
3	B	F	P3	5 months	Ilorin	Muslim	M
4	B	F	P4 (later, AHT)	8	Ilorin	Muslim	P***
5	B	F	P5	2 months	Ilorin	Muslim	P
6	B	F	P6	9.5	Town near commB (partly local)	Christian	M
7	B	F	P6 (stage 3)	N/A	Town near commB (partly local)	Muslim	P
8	B	M	Arabic	8.5	Ilorin	Muslim	M****

*Monogamous (M) or polygynous (P)

**Local teachers lived within or beside communities. Females were quick to point out they had married into, but were not from, their resident communities. Partly local teachers lived less than a 10minute drive to either school usually in a larger community or a town.

***Monogamous during stage 2. By stage 3, husband had married another wife.

****Monogamous during stage 2, but with imminent plans to marry a second wife

Appendix D. Parent info and consent form

A study of parents' perspectives and practices on the schooling of their children in non-urban areas of Northcentral Nigeria

PARENT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Bukola Oyinloye

Institution: The Open University (The OU), United Kingdom

Approved by: The OU Human Research Ethics Committee & The Nigerian National Health Research Ethics

Committee (NHREC) (TBC)

Period of Data Collection: November 2018 to March 2019

Phone #s (local / international): 0806 xxx xxxx / +44xxxxxxx

1. Introduction

Thank you for interest in being a part of this study. My name is Bukola Oyinloye, a researcher from The Open University in the United Kingdom (UK). This study aims to understand parents' perspectives and practices in relation to the schooling of their children. It is being sponsored by the University (which has no connection to your child's school) and this document provides information about what it entails and serves as the consent form. I will verbally translate the information into Yorùbá so we will review it together and if you have any questions as we do, I will be happy to answer them.

2. What is the objective of this study?

Through this study, I would like to understand the following: What influences the perspectives of parents on the schooling of their children? What practices do parents engage in relative to the schooling of their children? How do these perspectives influence the practices? This is so that we can better understand what you as a parent think and do in relation to schooling and your relationship with the school so that we can better understand the environments in which children learn.

3. When will the study happen?

The timeline for the study is between November 2018 and March 2019, to allow for enough time to be able to meet with most of the participants twice and for any delays. No data will be collected during the December holiday period when schools are closed.

4. Who will I talk to and how?

I would like to speak with parents of pupils (like yourself), pupils themselves, teachers, head teachers and education officials to get some perspectives in relation to the above questions. I would also like to visit parents and pupils' homes to speak with them and observe what they do after school. Only a few pupils in P4 have been selected with the help of the school and you are a parent to one of those children. This same information about the study will be shared with all the other participants of the research (for children, it will be highly simplified) and their consent will be obtained. I will only chat briefly with your child and this will happen when I visit the home. Nevertheless, I need your consent to do so. All the information gathered from these different activities and persons will be analyzed to better understand parents' perspectives and practices in relation to schooling. There is another school community participating in this study in the local government – this same process will be repeated there.

I would like to record our conversation as it will be very difficult to write down everything you will say accurately and quickly otherwise. I would also like to take some photographs and make some video recordings of our conversations, of you and your child at home, your child in school and the home environment, including any relevant activities that might occur. All images and video recordings will be shown to you, including those of your children at school, for approval and any image or recording that you do not approve of will be deleted. These data will be analyzed along with those from our conversations to achieve the objectives of the research.

5. What will the information or data collected be used for?

The data from our conversations, and the approved images and recordings, will be analyzed and the findings used to write a report which will be submitted to the sponsoring institution in January 2021, stored on the institution's online repository (once finalized), and may also be used to write other reports/articles which may be published in academic publications such as journals (some of which may be publicly accessible online), conference publications or books. The findings from the research may lead to recommendations on ways to foster positive home and school relationships in order to support children's learning. Specifically, the approved photographs (and/or still images from video recordings) as well as segments of recordings may be used to support the dissemination of the research findings at academic conferences in order to illustrate or further illuminate the findings. They may also be used during supervision meetings with my supervisors as part of the analytical process. Images and videos will not be used on public web spaces or on any social medium such as Facebook or Twitter (unless otherwise requested by you) and only those shown to you and approved by you will be used for academic dissemination and publication purposes. Audiences at academic conferences will be kindly requested to refrain from sharing disseminated images on social media platforms. To note, consent for capture or use of images and video recordings may be later withdrawn i.e. during the fieldwork itself or up until January 2021 when the thesis will be produced if you later change your mind.

Before finalizing the findings, I will return to Kwara later in 2019 and hold a meeting with all the participants to present the preliminary findings and make sure there is no misrepresentation of people's views. Initially, these meetings will be held with participants individually but if there is interest in holding a joint meeting, then this will be arranged. This meeting will also provide another opportunity to review the images and recordings, and if you change your mind, you may withdraw your consent for their use at this time.

6. Is the study confidential?

Yes. The study will comply with the data protection policies of the University and the UK which have guidelines to protect the information of participants in such activities. All data from the study will be anonymized and any personal data collected kept confidential. This means that no one will be able to identify you and only you and I will know the contents of this discussion. My Managers that University may sometime request access to the recording; however, they will not be able to identify you. All data collected will be stored on secure electronic platforms owned by the university (transcribed or transferred first as necessary), and will be kept for a maximum six months after the report has been finalized in January 2021 in case there are any corrections to be made. After this, the anonymized data from our discussions (excluding the photos and video recordings which will be permanently deleted) will be shared on the University's secure data repository (Open Research Data Online, ORDO) where it will be stored for up to ten years.

7. Are there risks associated with my participation in the study?

No risks are foreseen as a result of your participation in this study. As noted, whatever we discuss will be kept confidentially so please free to speak openly. The information collected will not be used to assess or judge your perspectives but to understand them. Therefore, there are no good or bad perspectives, only your perspectives, whatever they may be.

8. What are the benefits of participating?

Your participation in this study will help to better understand the perspectives, needs and concerns of parents and may lead to recommendations which may be used to, if needed, improve the relations between schools and parents in order to support children's learning.

9. Will I receive compensation?

There is no compensation for participation.

10. Do I have to participate?

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during our discussion or even during the data collection period. If you decide to withdraw, you may request that your data be destroyed and not be used as part of the study. Again, if you choose not to participate, this will not have any implications for you or your child's relationship with the school. You are also under no obligation to answer all the questions. You do not have to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Feel free to ask me any question at any point during our discussion. If you wish to share any further relevant information or ask any question even after our discussion today, you may contact me at **0806 xxx xxxx**. If you wish to share any other information or contact me after the data collection period in relation to the study, you may contact me at **+44xxxxxx** or **bukola.oyinloye@open.ac.uk**. Our discussion today will last for about 45 minutes but you may end it at any time.

11. Ethical guidelines

The study will follow the ethical guidelines of the University as well the British Educational Research Association in the UK so that it is done in a way that is respectful, has integrity and is trustworthy. It will also follow the 2007 Nigerian National Code of Health Research Ethics (NNCHRE) which applies to all research involving human participants and the 2016 Nigerian Policy on research with children, both of which are produced by the Federal government.

12. Who else can I talk to about this study?

If you have any complaints or issues about any aspect of the study, please contact my Manager, Dr. Jane Cullen at **xxxxxx** or at **+44xxxxxxxxx**. Your issues/complaints will be addressed in a confidential manner.

13. Request for consent

Below are some statements to demonstrate that you have agreed to be a part of this study. I will verbally translate them to Yorùbá and you can circle your preferred response and sign in the area indicated. If you would prefer, I can circle your response as you say them and you may provide a verbal consent which will be recorded as your agreement. I will also leave you a copy of the form as a reference. Before we proceed, do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time.
Bukola Oyinloye

Please circle the appropriate response and sign below.

Have you understood the information provided about this study?		Yes	No
Have you been given an opportunity to ask questions?		Yes	No
Have your questions been adequately answered?		Yes	No
Do you agree to participate in this study?		Yes	No
Do you agree for our discussion(s) to be recorded?		Yes	No
Do you agree for me to chat with your child (or children)?		Yes	No
Do you agree for my chats with your child (children) to be recorded with an audio recorder?		Yes	No
Do you agree for me to take pictures of you, your child (children) at home and in school, including relevant activities?		Yes	No
Do you agree that the pictures captured can be used for academic purposes?		Yes	No
Do you agree for me to make video recordings of you, your child (children) at home and in school, including of relevant activities?		Yes	No
Do you agree that the recordings taken (including extracted still photographs) can be used for academic purposes?		Yes	No
Do you understand that your participation is voluntary and that you can withdraw from this research at any time during the data collection period?		Yes	No
Date	Parent name	Researcher signature	
	Parent signature or voice file unique ID		

Appendix E. Parents' interview guide (sample questions)

Fieldwork

1. Perspectives about schooling

- What do you think is the purpose of schooling?
- Why do you think children should go to school?
- At what age do you think children should start school? Why?
 - *What do children do in this community before they start going to school? Where are they? Who are they with? What did they do/learn? From whom? How?*
 - *Do you remember the time before this primary school was opened? What did children do in this community during this time? Did they go to another school in another community or did they stay home? What did they do/learn at home? From whom? How?*
- Do you think that your child is learning everything that you think they should learn in school? If not, what do you think is missing?
- How much schooling do you want your children to complete?
- What do you want your children to do once they have completed the schooling that you expect them to complete?
- What do you want your children to become?
- What do you think children should do so that they can 'succeed' in school?
- What do you think children should do so that they can 'succeed' in life?
- Do you know the children in your community that do well in school (or do better than your child in school)? Why do you think they do well in school? [*Do you think it is their parents that help them do well in school? What do you think they do differently than other parents whose children don't do as well?*]
- What opportunities do you think are available to children who go to school and children who do not?
- Did you go to school yourself? If no, why not? If yes, how much schooling did you complete? Did you do all the schooling you wanted? If not, why not?

2. Perspectives about child's school

- What do you think about your child's school?
- What do you like about your child's school?
- What do you not like about your child's school?
- What would you change about the school, if you could?
- Do you know the name of your child's teacher(s) or headteacher? If not, why not? How often do you speak with them? What do you think of your child's teacher? What do you think they are doing well? What do you think they should be doing that they are not doing?
- What do you think is the role of the teacher in your child's schooling? What do you think is your role in your child's schooling? Do you think parents and teachers can work together on children's schooling? If so, how?

3. Practices (at school)

- Do you participate in activities at your child's school? Why or not?
- If yes, what kind of activities do you do at your child's school? How often?
- If yes, what do you think are the benefits of taking part in activities in your child's school?
- If not, do you think not taking part will affect your child in any way?
- Do you think all parents should take part in activities in their child's school? Why or why not?
- Why do you think other parents do not take part in activities in their child's school?

4. Practices (at home)

- Are you home with your child from the time they get home until they go to sleep? If not, who is home with him/her?
- What does your child do at home after school before they go to sleep? How do you think this prepares them for school the next day?
- How is this different from the weekday to the weekend?
- Do you help your child with his/her school activities, such as homework? If yes, how? If no, why not? If not, is there someone else that does?
- What other things do you do with your child at home that you think helps them in school? What things do you do that you suspect might not be helpful?
- Are you doing everything you would like to do at home to support your child's schooling? If no, why not? What else do you think you can do?
- What do you think parents, in general, can do for their children at home to prepare them for school?
- Do you think you are doing everything that you can to help your child 'succeed' in school (whether at school or at home)? If not, why not? What kinds of things do you wish you could do but cannot? Why not? What resources or skills do you think you need in order to be able to do the things that you wish you could do?

5. Learning, generally

- What is the most recent thing your child has learned how to do at home? At school? How did that happen? Who helped him / her and how? What do you think is the best way to help a child learn something? What do you think is the best to help a child learn at school?
- How do you help your child learn?
- How do you know that your child is learning at school?

6. AoB

- Do you have any questions for me or is there anything else you would like to share with me that we have not discussed?

7. Conclusion

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As I said before, what we have talked about is only between us. If you think of anything else that you would like to tell me, please contact me at 0806 xxx xxxx.

Follow-up

1. Apprenticeships

- Can you define ise owo? (*kini itumo ise owo?*)
- Will your child learn ise owo? Which trade?
- Who chooses which trade?
- Who chooses which trainer (parent or child) and how?
- How often do children attend, when, with whom?
- From whom do they learn when they are there, master trainer or other apprentices?
- How much is paid for each apprenticeship program, for what duration? Is it paid all at once or can be paid gradually?
- Who typically pays for the program?
- How do children graduate (who decides how and when)?
- At what age do children start the apprenticeships?
- Why do they [seem to] begin so early and while going to school?
- Do you think it gives them time to do their schoolwork?
- What is the difference between these and more formal apprenticeships (types of trade, cost, etc)? Is there a difference between learning from the neighbour (Iya X) or learning from an institution (i.e. trade school or poly)? Why is your child learning from Iya X and not an institution (or are institutions only for certain kinds of trades)?
- Can government do anything to support [the parents of] children learning ise owo (informally)?
- Are trades gendered i.e., do boys select a certain type and girls another?
- Can a child decide to do apprenticeship on their own without support or approval from parent(s)?
- Are there many children in this community who do not learn ise owo?

2. Employment

- How many parents have children who have done tertiary education but who are yet to have a job? Years of unemployment?

3. Parents' own Arabic Schooling

- Did you go to Arabic school (ile kewu) yourself? If so for how long, if you can remember?

4. After school practices

- Why do you check your child's books after school? Is it what the schools have recommended or is there another reason?

5. Major Life Events

- What memorable life events has made you who you are today?
- Have you always lived in this community? If not where else and why?

Appendix F. Teachers' interview guide (sample questions)

Fieldwork

1. Perspectives re schooling

- What do you think is the purpose of schooling?
- Why do you think children should go to school?
 - *Are you a native of this community? What did children learn to do before the school was opened? Who taught them? How?*
- At what age do you think children should start school? Why?
- Do you think that pupils are learning everything that you think they should learn in school? If not, what do you think is missing?
- What do you think pupils should do so that they can 'succeed' in school?
- What do you think pupils should do so that they can 'succeed' in life?
- What do you think parents of your pupils think about school?
- What do you think is the difference between pupils who do well in school and those who do not?
- What opportunities do you think are available to children who go to school and children who do not?

2. Practices (at school)

- Do you organize activities for parents of the pupils in your school?
- If yes, what kind of activities? How often?
- If yes, what do you think are the benefits of doing this?
- If no, why not?
- What types of activities do your pupil's parents take part in in the school (e.g., PTAs, SBMCs, fundraising, etc)
- Do you think all parents should take part in activities in their child's school? Why or why not?
- Why do you think parents do or do not take part in activities in their child's school?
- Do you know the name of your pupil's parents? How often do you speak with them? If not, why not? What do you think the parents of your pupils selected for this study should be doing that they are not doing? What do you think your pupils' parents in general should be doing?
- What do you think is the role of the parent in pupil's schooling? What do you think is your role in pupil's schooling? Do you think parents and teachers should work together to help pupils in school? If so, how?

3. Practices (at home)

- What do you think happens with your pupils between the time they get home and when they go to sleep? Why do you think so?
- What do you think parents / pupils could be doing to prepare them for school during the week or on weekends?
- Why do you think some parents do this and other parents do not?

4. Learning, generally

- What is the most recent thing you have taught your pupils? How did you make sure that they learned it? How do you know that they learned it? What do you think is the best way to help a pupil learn something?

5. Relationship with parents (for Head Teachers)

- What is the relationship between the school and parents in this community?
- Why do you think this is the case?
- If the relationship is poor, what do you think can be done to improve it? If it is good, has it always been good (i.e., since the establishment of the school)? If not, how did things change? If it is good, what do you think made it so and how do you maintain it as such?

6. AoB

- Do you have any questions for me or is there anything else you would like to share with me that we have not discussed?

7. Conclusion

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As I said before, what we have talked about is only between us. If you think of anything else that you would like to tell me, please contact me at 0806 xxx xxxx.

Follow-up (Teachers' focus groups)

Teaching in rural environments

- What do you like about teaching in this community? Please provide an example of a time you enjoyed being here.
- What do you not like about teaching in this community? (example)
- If they wanted to transfer you to an urban school in the state capital, would you be happy about it?
- How do rural children learn differently from urban children?
- How do parents know when it's time to bring their children to school?

Others

- Why do you give children take home assignment (what is its purpose)?
- Do your children often do their assignments? Why do you think they don't? Why do you continue to give them if you know they won't do it?
- Why do you think children are late or absent from school?
- Do the things that they do at home (i.e. chores like fetch water, plant or dig up cassava, etc.) help them or their parents? What is the point?
- In what ways do you engage with parents as teachers?
- Were you taught how to engage with parents (i.e., in NCE)? Where did you learn to do what you do?
- What do you think are the roles of parents? What do you expect?
- What kinds of things do you tell parents when they attend the PTAs?
- In what ways can you collaborate with parents to support children's learning?
- Why do you think children should look a certain way to come to school (i.e., morning assembly inspection)?

Appendix G. Estimated cost of primary to SSS (2018/2019)

	SchoolB pre-primary & primary								SchoolA JSS			SchoolA SSS				
	KG1	KG2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	JSS1	JSS2	JSS3	SSS1	SSS2	SSS3	SSS3 SIP**	
Entrance	700								3720			10000				
School Badge	100								500							
Term1	100	100	450	450	450	450	450	450	1420	1420	1420	1300	1300	1300	300	
Term2	100	100	450	450	450	450	450	450	1420	1420	1420	1300	1300	1300	300	
Term3	100	100	450	450	450	450	450	450	1420	1420	1420	1300	1300	1300	300	
Craft	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420								
Report Card (termly)	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300								
P6 exam & certificate								2500								
P6 graduation party (minimum)								2500								
JSS3 cert mock exam											2500					
JSS3 cert (WAEC)											10500					
SSS3 cert mock exam														5000		
SSS3 cert option 1 (WAEC)***														27000		
SSS3 cert option 2 (NECO)														27000		
UTME (pre-uni, called JAMB)														5000		
Total	1820	1020	2070	2070	2070	2070	2070	7070	8480	4260	17260	13900	3900	67900	900	
Total primary / JSS / SSS / Overall*	Total primary							20260	Total JSS		30000	Total SSS			86600	136860

*Increases annually. Excludes other COMPULSORY costs: 1) School uniform (once at entrance, and mending/replacement over time). SchoolB JSS sells uniform at an extra 1200Naira (total entrance fee 4920Naira) but most parents sew elsewhere to save; 2) School materials e.g., exercise books, pens, textbooks, backpacks, sandals & socks, sports uniforms, etc.; and 3) In-kind contributions for school e.g., brooms, cutlass, etc. **SIP (student improvement program): after school lessons for students writing exams ***SSS certification of completion (NECO recognized only in Nigeria) - many students write both to increase chances of passing, and making the cut-off for the pre-university exam commonly called JAMB. WAEC/NECO have official fees but many schools add to this, some as much or more than 10,000Naira. JAMB fees are paid online so schools cannot add. Fees increase annually. WAEC/NECO costs indicated here are school's fees. Until 2016 when it was 'verbally' scrapped by the Federal government, students also had to write a 'post-UTME' exam at the specific universities they applied, usually 4,000 to 5,000Naira. Many universities have continued the practice.